No. 2

AVON WESTERN READER

25¢

ERNEST HAYCOX ★ JAMES B. HENDRYX ★ JOSEPH H. JACKSON
STEWART EDWARD WHITE ★ HARRY SINCLAIR DRAGO

A Collection of Top-Notch "Westerns"

Here is another slam-bang, rootin'-tootin' collection of western tales that will transport you to the wide open spaces where a man's best friends are his horse and his gun. Carefully selected from scores of fine stories, this group, in our opinion, belongs among the top-notch "westerns" of recent years.

We think you will particularly enjoy James B. Hendryx's humorous yarn of the great northwest, "The Man with the Glass Eye." Ernest Haycox contributes a masterful study of Indian-fighting days in "Weight of Command." There are equally entertaining stories by Joseph H. Jackson, Stewart Edward White, Bret Harte and Harry Sinclair Drago.

Each author in this book has been widely acclaimed for his ability and skill in bringing to life the thrilling era of the old wild west. Here is a collection for everyone with adventure in their blood and romance in their heart.

21152

AVON Fiction

WESTERN READER

No. 2

Stewart Edward White
Harry Sinclair Drago
Joseph H. Jackson
James B. Hendryx
Ernest Haycox
Bret Harte

AVON BOOK COMPANY
JOS. MEYERS E. B. WILLIAMS
119 West 57th Street, New York 19, N. Y.

AVON WESTERN READER NO. 2

COPYRIGHT, 1947, AVON BOOK COMPANY

B	S	T
0	2	1
2	1	0
7	0	5
0	0	2

1 75
2 75
3 3.00
4 50

-150 275 1.25

1 -
Pos 125
Tob 25
Tos 150

Each Story In This Volume
Is Complete and Unabridged

Printed in U.S.A.

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NAILED DOWN from THE WILD BUNCH AND OTHER STORIES by Harry Sinclair Drago. Copyright, 1925, by Doubleday & Company, Inc.

WEIGHT OF COMMAND by Ernest Haycox. Copyright, 1940, by The Crowell Collier Pub. Co. Reprinted by permission of Ernest Haycox.

THE IDYL OF RED GULCH from THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP by Bret Harte. With the kind permission of Houghton Mifflin Co., authorized publishers of Bret Harte's works.

BURIED TREASURE from ARIZONA NIGHTS by Stewart Edward White. Copyright, 1907, by Doubleday & Company, Inc. Copyright, 1935, by Stewart Edward White.

DICK FELLOWS from TINTYPES IN GOLD by Joseph Henry Jackson. Copyright, 1939, by The Macmillan Company and reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

THE MAN WITH THE GLASS EYE by James B. Hendryx. Copyright, 1945, by Short Stories, Inc.

Due to a last minute change in copy, James B. Hendryx was listed among the authors appearing on the front cover of Western Reader No. 1. We sincerely regret any embarrassment or inconvenience caused Mr. Hendryx by this mistake.

CONTENTS

NAILED DOWN

By Harry Sinclair Drago 7

WEIGHT OF COMMAND

By Ernest Haycox 36

THE IDYL OF RED GULCH

By Bret Harte 48

BURIED TREASURE

By Stewart Edward White 57

DICK FELLOWS

By Joseph Henry Jackson 85

THE MAN WITH THE GLASS EYE

By James B. Hendryx 103

Harry Sinclair Drago

Nailed Down

I. IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

WITH THE passing years, Hayes City, New Mexico, had grown up around a little treeless plaza, a block square. Today, just before noon, a medicine show had pulled into town, the big wagon drawn by four weary-eyed broncs. The outfit was now parked facing the bank, which stood on the southeast corner of the plaza.

Shows of any sort were so infrequent that the unheralded arrival of this one had thrown the town into a mild fever of excitement. For the past fifteen minutes a man on horseback had been riding around the square, ballyhooing the performance that was about to take place.

"Lay-dees and gen-tul-men!" he called. "Big, free show at two-thirty! Professor Londorf and his Magic Discovery! Singing! Dancing! The best show you've ever seen!"

He put a lot of voice into it, but somehow his cry lacked a professional ring. Nor was his appearance that of the usual medicine show flunkey; for, save for the faded purple turban, perched incongruously on his head, he might have been taken for a cowboy. Indeed, his present rôle was a new one, for he was none other than the Santa Fé Kid, who, as one of Doc Munday's gang of outlaws, had been robbing trains and hoisting banks in southern Kansas, Oklahoma, and the Texas Panhandle for three years and more.

He continued on around the plaza until he found himself back at the gaudily painted wagon again. He hitched his pony to a wheel beside a horse already tethered there. It was almost time for the show to begin—and he was not thinking particularly of the medicine show.

A crowd of almost a hundred had gathered already, little suspecting what the next few minutes were to bring. Inside the wagon, behind curtained windows, Professor Londorf lay stretched out in his bunk, bound hand and foot and with a gag in his mouth. Beside him sat a man with a blue-nosed forty-five in his hand. He was Little Bill, Doc Munday's lieutenant, a little runt of a man with a hard-bitten face who once had run wild at the head of his own bunch of long riders. His attention shifted from the professor to

the four members of the troupe, which included the professor's wife, sitting stiffly erect on a trunk at the rear of the wagon.

"The show'll be startin' directly," he informed them. "I hope none of you tries to make any trouble. If you jest do as you've been told you won't git hurt. If any of you tries to spoil our play you're a-goin' to git hurt aplenty. Jest git that all straightened out in your minds right now."

He heard the Santa Fé Kid, who had finished his ballyhooing, enter. The Kid closed the door behind him carefully. There was a worried frown on his face.

"No sight of them yet," he muttered.

"They'll be here—right on the dot," Little Bill assured him. "We got a minute or two to go yet. . . . We said half-past two."

Bill's eyes strayed to the mouth of the alley next to the hotel. Even as he looked, four horsemen rode into view.

"There they are—just as I said!" he announced hurriedly. "You git on the platform and make a short announcement, Kid; the show's startin' right now. I'll send the actors out—and they better be funny."

With the town sprawled out before them, the four horsemen in the alley hesitated a moment before turning their ponies' heads toward the bank, which was their objective. They were an ill-favored crew, save for the tall black-haired man who was their leader. A smile of satisfaction softened his reckless mouth as he saw the crowd gathered about the medicine show. Nip and Tuck, the Professor's blackface comedians, were outdoing themselves under Santa Fé's watchful eyes.

"Everything's working out fine," he said, his gray eyes keen as an eagle's. "It was a smart idea, sticking up the professor and sending his outfit into town to divert the crowd. If our luck holds we'll pull this trick without a shot being fired."

Until now the scene of Doc Munday's activities had not included New Mexico, and principally because it had always been his plan to strike swiftly, and before pursuit could be organized, to dart back to comparative security in that lawless no man's land that was the Cherokee Strip. Doc was far afield this time; but the added danger it entailed was offset in his mind by the fact that he had been extremely cautious and by the hope that he and his men would go unrecognized.

It was a vain hope, especially in a country where men were shifting about continually. Doc Munday realized it a moment later, for just as they had turned their horses to pass the hotel, he heard a

chair come down with a startled bang. Two old men sat on the porch. One of them was staring at him with bulging eyes.

"Jee-rusalem!" Doc heard him gasp in an awe-choked voice. "It's Doc Munday!" The man turned to his companion to find him pulled up to sudden wakefulness with surprise as great as his own.

A grim smile curled Doc's lips. His name seemed to put a spell on the two men. As a sop to his vanity it meant nothing, coming now. He knew the jig was up. Within five minutes the whisper that the outlaws were there in force would run around town. Guns would begin to pop.

Doc pulled up his pony and dropped back until he rode abreast his men: Bitter Root, veteran of a hundred bank robberies; Jeff Burnette, cagey always, and ice in a pinch; Bat Moffett who had ridden with the Daltons. Doc looked them over. They were cool, nerveless.

"Boys, they know we're here," he said, jerking his head in the direction of the porch. "Too bad Santa Fé didn't rope in those two old junipers. They seem to be the only ones he missed."

"I can put a stop to that in a hurry," Bitter Root whipped out, fingering a six-gun.

"Not that way; it wouldn't help us," said Doc. "We'll be in the bank directly and make our stand as we planned. Remember, I don't want any needless taking of life here. If we have to shoot our way out—well, that's different. Don't waste a second then, and shoot to kill every time. Little Bill and Santa Fé will be covering us."

Time was the very essence of success for them now, and yet, because they feared to attract attention, they walked their horses to the bank corner. No one bothered to look twice at them. The professor's wife, an over-ripe blonde, was singing a tear-wringing ballad that had the crowd spellbound.

Doc was the first off his horse.

"Come on, let's go," he urged tensely.

The others, save Bat, slid to the ground. Bat gathered up the reins of all four horses, ready for an instant getaway. Bitter Root took up his stand at the bank door. Doc and Jeff went inside.

Having planned the job carefully, they not only knew how many men they had to face, but the caliber of each. Better still, they knew that Heck Pierce, the sheriff, had gone to Uvalda, twenty miles away, to deliver a prisoner.

There were no customers in the bank; just the cashier and his two assistants, watching the show across the street through the windows. Doc lined them up quickly.

"Just take it easy," he warned. "Keep your hands in the air; we won't be in here long."

Jeff leaped over the counter and ran to the vault to hurriedly sweep the paper money and gold coin into a pair of canvas saddle-bags. A strange quiet had descended; the air charged with an electric tension.

It was far from a new experience for Doc Munday, but his throat was as tight as the first time he had marched into a bank with the heel of a gun in his hand. He wet his lips unconsciously, telling himself everything was moving along as he had planned. The next moment, however, a bullet shattered one of the windows. The glass fell with a shivery sound. A second shot followed, and then the fusillade began in earnest, the slugs pinging wickedly off the bricks. But the bullets were all striking high, and he blessed his stars for a foresight that had led him to tell Little Bill to park the medicine wagon directly in front of the bank. The firing was coming from the second-story windows of the Hayes City Mercantile Company, across the plaza. The crowd about the wagon was in the line of fire, and the snipers had to shoot high or mow them down.

Doc glanced at the wagon. Little Bill and Santa Fé were on the platform, a gun in each hand, defying the panic-stricken audience to run.

"They won't be able to hold them long," he told himself. "If a shot goes wild they'll run like sheep."

With a sigh of relief, he heard Jeff dump the bulging saddle-bags on the counter. Doc tossed them over his shoulder.

"Start moving toward the door," he told the cashier and his aides.

The men held back, their faces white. He jabbed the muzzle of a six-gun into the cashier's back. It was a convincing argument. But just as they reached the door, one man threw caution to the winds and dashed out into the street, screaming wildly. The other two kept their heads, and forming a screen for Doc and Jeff, marched out to the horses.

Bat's right arm was hanging limply. From behind the stone wagon step, Bitter Root raised a gory head. Doc got an arm under him.

"Can you make it, Bitter Root?" he demanded fiercely.

"Sure! Just lost a little scalp. The blood's blindin' me." He tried to wipe it out of his eyes with a sleeve.

"Get in your saddles!" Doc ordered. "We're moving! We go out the way we came in!"

He tossed the bags that held the loot over his saddle fork and

swung up. Guns barking to overawe the crowd, the outlaws made their way to the wagon and picked up Little Bill and Santa Fé. In another moment, all six were dashing toward the alley beyond the hotel.

"That show outfit worked out slick, didn't it?" Santa Fé called to Doc.

"Sure did!" Doc answered. "Saved our bacon all right."

They had only a yard or two to go when a horseman raced across the plaza. He was standing up in his stirrups, a rifle to his shoulder.

"It's Heck Pierce!" Little Bill cried.

He had hardly finished when he felt a bullet tear through his battered Stetson. But they were in the alley now, spurring their horses and laying down a furious barrage in back of them.

It did not deter Heck. He came on resolutely until Santa Fé shot his horse out from under him. The animal stuck its head into the ground and rolled end over end. The sheriff crashed into a stable wall.

"Reckon that will slow him up," Bat called out.

"Not for long," Doc thought. "The fireworks aren't over yet."

In another three or four minutes they were out of town, free for the moment. Ahead of them stretched a broken mountain country, sparsely populated and untraversed by railroad or telegraph line. Their horses would last until night fell. At the first convenient ranch they would help themselves to fresh mounts. With luck, they would be back in the Strip by noon the following day.

Little Bill pulled up abreast Doc, a grin on his weather-beaten face. "Old Heck was sure comin a-smokin', wa n't he?" Doc nodded.

"He sure was shooting at you, old-timer. He got back sooner than I calculated." His eyes were on Bitter Root and Bat, the wounded men. "Heck will be after us directly"

"Reckon he's sure to do that," Little Bill agreed. "Jeff tells me we got it this time—about twenty thousand, he figgers."

"Yeah, it's a killing, all right." There was little enthusiasm in Doc's tone. "As soon as we get out of sight of town, Bill, I'm going on with Bitter Root and Bat. I'll fix them up the best I can. You and the rest lay back to cover us."

The tall man's sobriquet of "Doc" had a diploma behind it. Rumor had it that he once had been a leading surgeon in St. Louis, and that a woman's broken faith had sent him into banditry. The woman part of it was true enough, but Doc Munday hailed from a city much further east than St. Louis. Still, that was peculiarly

his own business and no one ever dared to grow very inquisitive about it.

Half an hour later, he pulled up with the wounded men where a creek cut across the road. He ripped a shirt to ribbons and cleansed and bound the wounds. None was serious.

"You fellows are tougher than bullhide," he said with a laugh. There was a pleasant quality in his voice that made Bitter Root's hill-billy twang and Bat's Texas drawl sound harsh in comparison.

Doc had just finished when the others rode up.

"No one in sight yet," Little Bill reported.

They went on, riding two abreast, Doc and Little Bill in the lead. All were soon white with dust. They had nothing to say. Only the creaking of leather and drumming of hoofs broke the silence.

Doc's eyes were bright with a wild exhilaration. As an outlaw he had reason to congratulate himself. He had successfully stuck up still another bank in spectacular fashion; he had not lost a man; and in the bags draped over his saddle bow were upwards of twenty thousand dollars—that big stake which is commonly supposed to be every outlaw's dream.

And yet, it was not quite that way with Doc Munday. The money meant little enough to him. The big adventure, the thrill of riding boldly into a hostile town and fighting his way out under fire came first. It was not that way with the others. With them, first and last, it was the money that counted.

It marked the difference between them—a difference of which they were but subconsciously aware, and that found expression only in their loyalty and faith in him.

The shadows were growing long by the time they began to climb out of the wide valley that swelled away to the Raton Peaks to the east. They pulled up to breathe their horses for a moment. From where they sat they could look back over the road they had just come. They scrutinized it intently for sign of a dust-cloud that should tell them they were pursued. But strain their eyes as they would they could not catch a glimpse of any moving object in the wide expanse of country spread out below them.

That was not as it should have been, and there was no blinking the fact. Faces sober with anxiety, they turned to Doc.

"There's only one thing to make of it," he declared gravely. "There's a shorter route to the north—and Heck has taken it." He but expressed the fear of all. They saw him run an eye over their jaded horses. Without a word he turned his big palomino into the road and began to use his spurs. "Come on!" he called back. "We sure have got to keep moving now."

II. TO SQUARE HIMSELF

THE SUN HAD BEGUN TO DROP behind the Guadalupe Range, far to the west, as Lucas Johnson climbed the rickety wooden ladder on the windmill which reared its head between the corral and house on his little ranch below the Raton Peaks. He had been up there a score of times in the past two hours, scanning the road which fell away to Hayes City below, hoping to catch a glimpse of the hired man who had been sent to town with orders to fetch the doctor at once.

Even as he stood on the topmost rung, searching out the gathering shadows below, a cry of agony reached him from the house. He trembled under its impact, fear clamping icy fingers on him. His life had been lived in the open. Some of it had not been blameless; but for two years he had striven mightily to wrest a living from these mountain meadows and make a home for the young wife whose life now hung in the balance, and on whom he was utterly dependent.

"God a'mighty," he groaned. "Anse ought to have been back hours ago. What can be keepin' him?"

He had asked himself that question fifty times already. Anse Lovell was steady enough around the ranch; in town, he often drank too much. But on that score, Doctor Purdy was an habitual offender himself. Anse might have found him incapacitated or, barring that, off to some other ranch, equally distant from town.

"I should have gone myself," Lucas sighed regretfully. "I shouldn't have listened to Belle. God knows I can't do nuthin' for her. It's a doctor she needs."

For a week, he had gone about in a daze, torn between fear and a bewildering exultation caused by nothing less than the knowledge that he was soon to become a father. This morning he had returned from the lower meadow to find Belle in bed, her hour near. Anse had been dispatched to town at once. But the day had worn on, and Anse had not returned.

It was evening now. Useless as it seemed, Lucas clung to the ladder until the sun dropped behind the mountains. Weary, hopeless, he started to descend when six horsemen crested one of the switchbacks by which the road gained the summit. He snapped to attention, spirits soaring. A warm flood of gratitude surged up in him. But the cry died in his throat as the truth forced itself on him. This couldn't be the doctor. Purdy was an old man; he always traveled over the country in a rig. These men were probably only cowboys, returning to one of the ranches on Broken Wagon Creek.

With leaden feet he shuffled into the room where Belle lay.

"Lucas, is he coming?" she asked piteously. "He must come soon——"

"Some men on the road," he murmured despairingly. "Fooled me for a moment——" He saw her turn her face to the wall to hide her disappointment, and he couldn't go on for a minute. "I'll hail 'em when they pass the house, Belle. Maybe they can tell me what's become of Anse."

Lucas realized as soon as he had said it how woefully unimportant that was now. To know where Anse was could do no good now.

Standing at the window, his impotence crushing him, he caught the pounding of hoofs. In a minute or two, six horsemen rounded the bend that led to the ranch. He watched them with slight interest and made no move to hail them. Belle had heard them, too.

"Perhaps you'd better speak to them, Lucas," she murmured weakly. "They may know something."

It pulled him up. It was only a step to the door. He opened it hurriedly, expecting to see the men riding on. To his surprise, they were turning into the yard. In the deepening twilight there was nothing familiar about them to his tired eyes.

Suspicion was not born in his mind until he saw that they were going on to the corral, where he kept his horses, instead of stopping at the house. Suddenly he knew why they were there. Without a word, he tiptoed back into the bedroom. A rifle stood in the corner behind the dresser. Belle's eyes were closed. He tried to get the gun out without disturbing her; but when he turned for the door she was staring at him wildly.

"Lucas—no!" she cried. "You promised me you'd never use a gun again. I heard them ride in. I don't want you to have any trouble with them. What do they want?"

"Belle, they're after our horses!"

The woman's eyes widened as understanding dawned in them.

"You mean they're outlaws, Lucas?"

"I—reckon that's what they are."

She clutched him madly, unbelievable strength in her hands. "You're not going out, Lucas!" she insisted.

Her appeal did not move him.

"I'll leave the rifle here," he said. "But I'm going out, Belle. They can't take the grays. I need 'em too bad for that."

"You don't need them half so much as I need you, Lucas. If anything happened to you——"

"Nuthin' goin' to happen to me. As soon as these men go, I'm puttin' you in a rig and startin' for town, as I should have done

this afternoon. It may be too late, but it's a chance, Belle, and no one's goin' to take it away from you."

He unlaced her fingers and strode to the door. As he closed it and stepped out he was ordered to throw up his hands. It was Doc Munday who faced him. Lucas obliged.

"We're just helping ourselves to some of your horses and leaving ours here," Doc explained. "If there's any damage, let me know what it is."

That voice! . . . Lucas could not speak for a moment, so great was his surprise. Doc came nearer. Suddenly he stiffened, too, staring incredulously at the man before him.

"Lucas!" he cried. "Is that you?"

"Yeah, Doc, it's me, all right——"

"This is your place?"

"Yeah——" he got out breathlessly.

"Well, I'll be . . . take them down, Lucas!"

In another moment they were pumping hands and grinning a little foolishly at each other.

It was their first meeting in three years.

"Just imagine, running into you like this." Doc could not get over his surprise. "Often wondered what had become of you. And this is where you holed up, eh? . . . Nice little place, Lucas."

"It's—comin' along all right, Doc." Sight of the tall man awakened memories that he had considered dead and buried. "I suppose you're in a hurry, as usual."

Doc laughed.

"Yes, we're stepping. We've a lot of miles to put under our belts before daybreak. I hope you don't mind about the horses. We need 'em, Lucas."

The big fellow did not answer. He had suddenly realized that there was a sinister angle to this situation that he had overlooked. Doc saw his eyes cloud with alarm.

"What is it, Lucas?" he demanded.

"Well, it's goin' to make it pretty tough for me, Doc, you takin' my horses this way. I been livin' inside the law; but Heck Pierce has a line on me. He knows I used to ride with you. The old man's a square-shooter. I reckon he wouldn't make me any trouble. But you can't kid his kind very much. It's goin' to look awful queer to him that you just happened to come to my ranch for fresh horses."

"Hunh!" A frown furrowed Doc's brow as he paused over his answer. "I—I guess you're right," he muttered thoughtfully. "I

hadn't thought of that. Don't want to get you into a jam, Lucas. Where's the next ranch?"

"The X L on Broken Wagon Creek—'bout eighteen miles."

Doc shook his head. "It's too far, Lucas; we've got to take your horses. When Heck shows up—just tell him the truth. He can't hold that against you. . . . By the way, where does that road that swings around to the north cut into this one?"

"It doesn't cut in at all, Doc. This is about as near as they get to each other. That north road is the old La Junta trail. It starts makin' tracks for the Kansas line just before it reaches the summit. I use it sometimes, comin' back from town. No trick to cut across the hills to the house here."

Doc nodded, his manner glum.

"I reckon it's much shorter than the road we took——"

"Yeah, quite a bit."

"Well, we came along pretty fast. If we're ahead now we'll stay ahead." He turned to glance at the corral. "We'll be pulling out in a minute or two."

The men had cut out the horses they wanted. Little Bill threw his saddle on one of the grays. Lucas saw him do it. It jerked him back to sharp realization of his own urgent need of the team. His blue eyes were as cold as ice as he whirled on the tall man.

"No, Doc, you can't have the grays," he ground out. "I can't stop you from helpin' yourself to my horses; but you can't have the grays. They're broken to harness, and they're the only ones I've got that will get me over the road. I'm needin' 'em mighty bad tonight. There's horses enough in the corral without takin' them."

It came as an abrupt termination of the pleasant camaraderie of the past few moments. A surprised look flitted across Doc Munday's face. He was peculiarly indebted to Lucas; and it was an obligation he had never forgotten.

"I guess that will be all right," he said. "You ought to know I wouldn't put you out any if I could help it. Let's walk over to the corral."

Lucas began to regret his outburst. "Anybody there I know?" he queried to cover his embarrassment.

"I'm afraid not——"

"What's happened to Tulsa—Red—Ike Kendrick?"

A bitter smile creased Doc's lips. "What happens to all outlaws?" he murmured. "You were smart, Lucas; you pulled out. Lot of us try it, but we don't get very far. It's either too late or——"

A scream that was the very epitome of human agony cut him short. He wheeled on his heels to face the house.

"What was that?" he demanded gruffly. Lucas went limp.

"My—my wife," he gasped pitifully. "Were expectin' a baby, Doc. That's why I need the team. I'm takin' Belle to town."

Doc listened again. "Hunh," he muttered. "You—waited a long time, didn't you?" Unconsciously there was a professional reprimand in his tone. "You'll never get that woman to town in time. Why isn't there a doctor here?"

Lucas froze in his tracks, staring in tongue-tied amazement at the man who stood before him as a thought went screaming down the corridors of his brain. He was not gazing on Doc Munday the outlaw any longer. He was seeing Doc Munday the man of science. He had prayed for a doctor to come. . . . Here was a doctor! And no drink-fuddled sloven either! It came as a tremendous discovery.

"Doc!" he cried. "*Doc!* You'll laugh, Doc, but God must have sent you here!" He told him how Anse had failed to fetch the doctor from town. "I ain't the prayin' kind, but I prayed this afternoon—leastwise I tried to pray—askin' God to help us. Won't you take a look at her, Doc? It won't take a minute. Belle's only a kid. If I lose her I'm licked. . . . Won't you take a minute?"

Doc could only shake his head, stung with the bitter irony of the situation.

"Lucas, you don't know what you're asking," he broke out fiercely. "We've been here too long already. You don't have to remind me of Fayetteville; I've never forgotten how you came back and picked me up. But——" He couldn't finish. The mute despair in Lucas' eyes, the crushed, beaten look of him were too much. "All right," he snapped, "I'll see what I can do. You go to the corral. Tell Billy to hurry. Tell him I said we are not to take the grays."

Lucas ran to the corral. The grays were put back. In three or four minutes, at most, the men were mounted. They walked their horses to the house. Doc came out as they pulled up. There was a set look on his face.

"Boys," he said, "you'll have to pull out without me. I'm staying here!"

There was instant protest from all five.

"You're kiddin', Doc," Little Bill insisted. He couldn't believe his ears. Lucas had told them why Doc had gone into the house. But that didn't explain why he should say he was staying. "Doc, this ain't no time for jokin'! Climb into your saddle, and we'll fan it out of here!"

"No, I'm not joking, Bill—I'm staying. This woman needs me."

"And so do we! You can't throw your chance away like this!"

The others shared Little Bill's anxiety for him. Doc's face lost some of its sternness.

"I'm not throwing away my chance," he said. "I'll be all right. I'll pull out of here after midnight, or soon as it's safe. In the meantime, you get going. Don't stall around waiting for me. I'll meet you over in the Strip."

Santa Fé edged his horse nearer.

"You mind giving us a reason for all this, Doc?"

"Not at all. You've all heard me tell how I dropped behind the fight three years ago in Fayetteville. It looked like the end for me. Well, this woman happens to be the wife of the man who came back and picked me up. It's my turn to square that now—and I'm not walking away from it. Now let's see you pound leather. It won't do me any good if the sheriff finds you here."

III THE LAW RIDES HARD

THE LONG TWILIGHT came to an end. Black night fell abruptly. Lucas sat in the kitchen, his rifle across his knees, alert to every sound within and without. He knew Heck's coming could be only a matter of minutes now.

But confused as his thoughts were, he fully appreciated the chance Doc was taking in remaining there, long years of imprisonment, possibly death, ahead of him if they turned him up.

"I couldn't let them take him," he thought. "If it comes to a showdown I'll have to line up with him."

He had placed the coffee-pot on the fire, but it continued to boil away now, unnoticed by him. Only the glow from the stove illumined his seamed face. In the inner room, he could hear Doc moving about. He heard him draw the shades. Presently a streak of light showed beneath the door. It dimmed even as he stared at it. He surmised that Doc had moved the lamp to the far end of the room so that his shadow would not fall across the drawn shades as he moved around.

The surmise was correct. Much might depend on little things like that. With the lamp attended to, Doc straightened up and viewed the simple preparations he had been able to make. They left a lot to be desired to a man of his hospital training.

A great calm enveloped him. His face was a stony mask. Inevitably the task that confronted him brought back memories of other

days—memories that were better forgotten. With iron will he closed the door on them.

Belle, utterly helpless, aroused his pity and sympathy; but he dared to tell himself he would not have stayed for her sake. He was doing this for Lucas. Remembering what Lucas had done for him, he found no reason to regard himself as a martyr.

For the moment, there was nothing more he could do for Belle. He started for the kitchen, listening carefully before he opened the door. He shook his head as he saw Lucas with his rifle across his knees.

"No, Lucas," he said, "that's the last thing in the world I want you to do. Put your rifle away. Light the lamp and try to go about your business as though I weren't here. . . . Have you put my stuff out of sight?"

"Yeah——"

"Well, that's fine. Strike a light now. Better put some water on the stove to boil. If a posse comes, just remember that I don't want you to do anything to excite anyone's suspicions. We'll even leave the bedroom door ajar. Unless Heck saw the boys ride away he'll have no reason to think one of us stayed behind."

He went to the door and peered out into the night as Lucas busied himself. Far off he thought he caught the drumming of hoofs. He listened again. The sound was unmistakable this time. He closed the door and turned to Lucas.

"They're coming, Lucas," he said without excitement. "You know what to tell them. I'll be inside. If by any chance they try to corner me, you keep out of it."

"But, Doc, I couldn't let 'em take you now——"

"You do as I say, Lucas. I want you to keep in the clear all the way." He started across the room only to stop beside the table. An amused twinkle softened his eyes as he gazed at the dishes Lucas had set out. "Better put one of those cups and saucers away," he murmured. "Heck might wonder who the second cup was for."

Lucas snatched them up and put them in the cupboard.

"That *would* have been a giveaway," he muttered without looking up. "I guess I don't know what I'm doin'. . . . Will Belle be all right, Doc?"

"I think so——"

Lucas wiped his damp forehead with his sleeve. He could hear the posse riding up now. He whirled to sound a warning, but Doc had already stepped back into the bedroom. In a moment there was a babel of voices without. Somebody knocked on the door.

"Come in!" Lucas called out.

Heck Pierce stalked into the kitchen. He was a short, stocky man with bushy white eyebrows and the round, pink cheeks of a child.

"I reckon you know why we're here," he began. His eyes searched out the corners of the room and came back to Lucas. The man's excitement did not escape the sheriff. "You—look as though you might have been expectin' us."

"Yeah—I figgered you'd be along, Heck," Lucas got out with an effort. "You're about fifteen minutes too late."

Heck had stopped at the corral. The sweat on the steaming horses had begun to stiffen their coats. From this he calculated that approximately fifteen minutes had passed since the saddles had been yanked off their backs. His expression lost none of its severity, but he was secretly pleased to find Lucas telling the truth. He had had his eye on him for months. In his time, Heck had befriended many outlaws, the great majority of whom had taken advantage of his kindliness. A few, like Lucas, had settled down to honest lives within the law. In his mind, they more than made up for the backsliders.

"Did you talk to them?" he asked, his tone as casual as though he were discussing the weather.

"Yeah——" It was all Lucas could do to keep his eyes from straying to the door behind which he knew Doc was standing, hearing every word that was said.

"You recognized them?"

"It was Doc——"

This was straight talk, and it lulled any vagrant suspicion in Heck's mind that all was not as it appeared.

"Kinda makes it bad for me, doesn't it, Heck?" Lucas volunteered.

Heck stopped his pacing to stare at him with a frown of surprise. Lucas' face was haggard-looking in the lamp-light; his nervous preoccupation plainly evident. The sheriff misunderstood the reason for it.

"Don't worry about this, Lucas," he said. "Your place was the handiest. Most natural thing in the world for them to come here. Reckon there was nothin' you could do but let 'em take the horses. . . . Doc must have been surprised to find you here."

"A pretty big surprise for both of us," Lucas admitted.

A grunt escaped Heck. He communed with himself for a moment.

"Suppose it gave you the itch to buckle on your hardware and trail along with 'em?"

Lucas grinned a little sheepishly. "That occurred to me, all right——"

Heck slapped him on the back encouragingly.

"Don't ever trip your self like that, Lucas. I never knew an outlaw who wasn't a fool—and I include the best of them. They're playin' with a stacked deck. They can't win. With an even break I'll round up this bunch before daylight."

"Yeah? What makes you think so, Heck?" The question sounded innocent enough. "They got a good start on you."

"I know; but the telegraph helped me a little this time. I caught a U. S. marshal at La Junta. Doc will find himself between two posses before long. He overplayed his hand this time."

Lucas shrugged his shoulders as though the matter did not interest him greatly.

"Fifteen minutes is quite a start," he said, hoping to hurry the sheriff on his way. "They'll be hard to find if you don't pull out of here pretty soon."

It struck a false note. Heck regarded him thoughtfully.

"I don't want to push 'em too hard," he declared with provoking deliberation. "I want that La Junta bunch to get into position before I begin to bear down."

Lucas felt his close scrutiny. "Lots of country beyond the Peaks," he murmured without looking up. "After a man crosses the headwaters of the North Fork, he can travel along for a good many miles without breaking cover."

This was another bid for Heck to be on his way. The sheriff divined as much.

"Shucks," he chuckled, "if I didn't know better I'd think you wanted me to round up that bunch. I know yore sympathies are all on the other side; you was always sort of a favorite with Doc."

"Well—we used to get along all right——" Lucas could feel the words sticking in his throat. He knew Heck was stalling. The sheriff was too good a manhunter to waste precious minutes in this fashion unless he had a reason.

Lucas found nothing further to say. Heck was silent, too. Suddenly the stillness was broken by a low whimper of agony from the inner room. It was Belle again. Lucas drew his breath in sharply.

"Who was that?" Heck snapped.

"My wife——"

"Your wife?" Heck echoed skeptically. "Lucas, there's somethin' wrong here! You're all tied into knots, man!" He took a step toward the door. "What's wrong with your wife?"

Lucas raised his troubled eyes to him. "We—we're expectin' a—a baby," he murmured chokingly.

"Oh, a baby. . . . Well!" Heck lowered his voice. It was his turn to feel ill at ease. He closed the bedroom door softly. "I—I knew there was somethin' wrong here. Never saw you lookin' so washed out, Lucas." He melted to pure good-will. "You'd think you would have said somethin'. Have you sent for Doc Purdy?"

"Yeah—yeah." A sigh of relief escaped Lucas. "Don't know what's happened to Anse. Sent him in just before noon."

"That's right," Heck agreed. "I saw Anse in the crowd when I was swearin' in my deputies. Doc's been on a bender for a day or two; but Anse will fetch him, all right. The old man knows enough to sober up when he's needed."

Belle called for Lucas. It was a heartrending cry. It struck fear in Heck's soul. The passing of life had become a commonplace to him; the coming of it filled him with awe. He tiptoed to the kitchen door, plainly anxious to be on his way, now.

"Wish I could do somethin' to help, Lucas," he paused to say, "but this is kinda out of my line. . . . I hope it's a boy."

"So do I," Lucas murmured.

He stood there until he heard the posse ride away. The door opened in back of him and Doc stepped into the kitchen. It startled Lucas. He wheeled around on his heels as though he expected to find a gun at his head.

"Take it easy," Doc advised, as calm and nerveless as ever. "He stayed a long while, didn't he?"

"Yeah. I was beginning to think he'd never pull out." Lucas swallowed nervously. "You—heard what he said, Doc?"

"Certainly——"

"Think he was tellin' the truth—about the posse from La Junta?"

"Without a doubt! But Little Bill is pretty smooth. He won't lead the boys into any jackpot like that. If they haven't stalled around waiting for me they'll be all right. That's the real danger."

Lucas caught the note of regret in his tone.

"I know you ought to be with 'em, Doc. . . . How much longer is it goin' to be?"

"It won't be long. Just pull yourself together. I'll have that cup of coffee now."

The coffee was black and bitter, but Doc seemed to relish it. Silence descended on them. It was strange how little they found to say to each other. When he had finished, Doc pushed the cup aside and glanced at his watch.

"Maybe you'd better step outside, Lucas. Let me know if you hear anything. I'll tap on the window if I want you."

The sky was drenched with stars. Behind the Peaks the moon was beginning to swing high, tipping the rimrocks with pale silver. It was a scene of utter tranquillity, but Lucas was not aware of it as he strode back and forth, the blood pounding at his temples.

The minutes dragged on until he lost track of time. Once he thought he heard shooting beyond the Peaks. It pulled him up short. He listened intently, but he couldn't be sure.

The silence of the grave had settled on the house. He wondered what he would have done without Doc. "No one else would have done this for me," he thought. A horse nickered plaintively in the corral. It did not break in on his musing. And yet, Doc had to tap but once on the window to send him running to the kitchen door.

He threw it open and rushed in to find Doc standing in the middle of the room, a blanket-wrapped bundle in his arms.

"Doc," he gasped breathlessly, "is—is it all right?"

A smile played over Doc's face. "Yes, everything's all right. It's a boy, Lucas!"

"A—a boy?" Lucas' mouth fell open in dumb surprise. Like a man in a trance, he shuffled across the floor to blink owlishly at his son.

"Gee, Doc, he's—he's an ugly little runt, ain't he?" he whispered huskily, the baby in his arms. "Reckon he'll get over this redness when he gets wind-tanned a little."

"You take him in to Belle, now," Doc advised.

Belle Johnson had married Lucas fully cognizant of his past. They had often spoken about Doc Munday. She had been able to identify him at once. She felt she owed her baby's life to him, and right or wrong—and undoubtedly he was wrong—she didn't want him to be captured. Despite the ordeal that motherhood had imposed on her, Belle insisted that Lucas urge Doc to go at once. He returned to the kitchen.

The rear door was open. Doc had stepped outside. He was smoking a cigarette and listening to the sounds the night brought him. He beckoned Lucas to join him.

"Guess I'll be drifting along," he said, "If you'll get my stuff out and let me have a horse."

"Well, you're sure goin' to get the best we've got, Doc. . . . Sorta hate to see you pull out right now." Lucas' tone was gloomy of a sudden. He shook his head as though debating the matter with himself. "Belle's worried about you. She thinks you ought to go. I ain't so sure."

"What do you mean, Lucas?" Doc asked sharply.

"You might be safer here till just before dawn. I—I couldn't be sure, Doc; but about twenty minutes back I thought I heard shootin' beyond the Peaks. It might mean somethin', and then again it might not."

It forced a grunt of surprise from Doc. He pulled himself up anxiously.

"You'd hardly be mistaken about anything like that, Lucas," he said, clipping the words off short. "You get my stuff. I'm pulling out right——" His voice trailed away to hushed silence. He looked at Lucas. "Did you hear anything?" he whispered.

Both listened. Their jaws locked. They might have been carved out of stone. Unmistakably they heard the creaking of leather, the murmur of voices two hundred yards away.

"God A'mighty! The posse is comin' back!" Lucas gasped, his eyes bulging with horror. "It's Heck!"

"The fools! . . . The fools!" Doc groaned. "They waited for me! . . . It was shooting you heard all right——"

IV. ROGUE'S REWARD

LUCAS TOOK A STEP toward the door. Doc caught him before he was silhouetted against the light from within.

"Not that way, Lucas. Heck may have his eyes on this door. We'll go around to the other side. You used to be cool enough when the going was tough. Use your wits a little now."

"But, Doc, they may not turn in at all——"

"They've turned in already! If Heck's got a man or two banged up he'll be hoping to find the doctor here."

In the protecting shadow of the house they made their way around to the north side and climbed through a window.

"Don't try to close the kitchen door," Doc warned. He picked up a book Belle had got from some mail-order house. It dealt with the care and feeding of babies. He handed it to Lucas. "Sit down at the table and pretend you're trying to make head or tail out of this. Let Heck walk right in on you before you look up."

Lucas took the book and seated himself at the kitchen table. Doc pulled the bedroom door back and stepped behind it. He could feel Belle's eyes on him.

"Everything's going to be all right, Belle," he assured her. "I promise you there won't be any trouble here."

He heard the posse pull up outside. In a moment or two he would

know what had happened to his men. The blood drained away from his face as he waited.

Heck came to the kitchen door. "Lucas——" he called guardedly. A chair scraped as Lucas got up.

"Well, you back, Heck?" Lucas was no actor, but he managed a fair semblance of surprise.

"We rounded 'em up," said Heck.

Doc's jaws clenched grimly. Every muscle stiffening.

"What do you mean, rounded 'em up?" Lucas gasped, his excitement genuine enough.

"Bitter Root and Santa Fé have robbed their last bank. I've got the others outside in irons."

It was all Doc could do to stifle the groan that shook him.

"And Doc—what happened to Doc?" Coming from Lucas, who was not quick-witted as a rule, it was nothing short of an inspiration.

"He got away," Heck admitted grudgingly. "I—I didn't figure he'd do that. I thought Doc Munday would stand and fight it out with his men as long as he could crook a finger over a trigger. . . . By the way, Lucas, is old Purdy here? I've got a couple of boys that need lookin' after."

"No—he didn't come. We had to get along without him, Heck."

"Then—it's happened, eh?"

"Yeah—it's a boy. It's a boy——"

"Naw. You don't mean it, Lucas?" There was pleased surprise in Heck's tone. "What do you know about that! Say—can I see the little feller, Lucas?"

Doc held his breath. Bitter Root and Santa Fé gone; the others in irons; his own security dependent on Lucas' cleverness, and he was not essentially a clever man.

"I—I guess you can," he heard Lucas answer. "I'll fetch him out, Heck."

Doc did not turn his head as Lucas entered the room and got the baby, afraid lest the man try to exchange a glance with him. He was not worried about Belle. He felt he could rely on her not to bring him to disaster.

Lucas returned to the kitchen with the babe in his arms.

"My!" Heck glowed. "Let me hold him, Lucas. Say, he's got a fine head, ain't he? Yes, sir! He's driven the last rivet in your goin' straight, I'm tellin' you. You're nailed down now. You never want this feller to have a long-rider for a dad."

Lucas drew in his breath nervously.

"I guess you're right, Heck. In fact, I know you are." He was

thinking of Bitter Root and Santa Fé. "Outlaw is only another name for a fool, just as you said."

Behind the door, Doc nodded a silent assent. "Fool?" he thought. "Worse than fool!"

"It means, Lucas, that you and Belle have somethin' to work for now," Heck went on. "I reckon you'll have to, too. Doc got about twenty thousand out of this job. The money's gone with him; we didn't get it."

There was an inference in his words that Lucas failed to understand.

"What's that got to do with me?" he demanded.

"I was thinkin' about your savin's. You had 'em in the Hayes City bank, didn't you?"

It pulled Lucas to his feet. Doc couldn't see the man's cheeks blanch under their coat of tan, but he caught his gasp of dismay and the note of fear in his voice as he said, "Every cent we got is there!"

"It ain't a big bank," Heck explained. "Losin' this twenty thousand will just about wreck 'em."

Doc heard Lucas slump into his chair, a groan on his lips. Behind him he heard Belle stir in her bed. He did not have to see their faces to sense the thought that was written on them.

"Winter comin' on," Lucas mumbled miserably. "The baby to be looked after——"

His eyes strayed to the door behind which Doc stood. Gratitude was gone from them. He felt cheated, betrayed. Hatred began to ferment in his tortured brain.

"I didn't mean to bust you up like this, Lucas," Heck said sympathetically. "This just proves again what I've always said. An outlaw rides into town with a gun in his hand. If he's lucky, he robs a bank and gets away; if his luck fails him and he's cut down—well, it's all over in a hurry. He gets a break either way. How about the people he leaves behind holdin' the sack? They're the ones to feel sorry for. . . . Maybe you can see that now."

Lucas did not answer. He sat with his head in his hands, staring intently at the floor. A frosty glitter had crept into his eyes. The baby began to cry.

"You better take him," Heck suggested. "Reckon he figures it's meal-time."

Lucas took the baby. Heck caught the danger signals in his eyes.

"Keep your head, Lucas," he advised; "you don't want to go off half-cocked. I'll get along now. If you come to town tomorrow, look me up."

"Sure——" Lucas answered tonelessly. He followed Heck to the open door. The lamplight revealed the three prisoners sitting sullenly in their saddles, hands manacled. They focused their eyes on him, asking mutely what had become of Doc. With stony indifference, Lucas closed the door. Heck gave the word and the posse rode away.

Lucas turned to find Doc standing beside the kitchen table, a look of desperation on his face. He had to pass him to carry the baby into Belle.

Doc let him go without a word. Even though he sensed the man's hostility, he bore him no resentment, for he could appreciate what the loss of his savings would mean to Lucas. He had not come up to tonight without realizing that outlawry was a ruthless business. It was all that Heck said it was.

"But it has another side too," he mused bitterly. "I don't know whether Heck would call it chivalry or just damned foolishness; but something in the crazy code we live by held me here tonight, when I should have gone on. We would have made it, all right, if I had. Bitter Root and Santa Fé would be alive this minute."

A sneer of contempt twisted his mouth as he recalled what Heck had said about his running out. "He missed a trick there, and he may have to pay for it before he flops himself down in Hayes City again."

As he stood in the open doorway, staring with unseeing eyes at the night, he was aware that Lucas had returned to the kitchen. He heard him close the bedroom door. Neither spoke. The silence became charged with a dreadful tension.

It laid violent hands on Lucas. Twice he started to speak and changed his mind. Finally he could not stand it any longer.

"You—better go," he said bluntly. "I was goin' to thank you for what you did; but that ain't necessary, now. You collected from me before you came. I had six hundred——"

Doc turned to face him. He stared Lucas to silence.

"No, Lucas, you don't mean that!" he exclaimed. "Two of my boys killed—the rest on their way to the pen—and you think six hundred dollars can square it? . . . Don't ever make that mistake again." They faced each other across the table, their mouths grim. "I didn't know he had taken your money," Doc went on. "But the stuff is in my saddle-bags. . . . You'll get yours."

Lucas' face flamed. He tried to look away and couldn't.

"You ought to flatten me, Doc. Why don't you tell me I'm an ingrate?"

"Don't feel that way about it," Doc insisted. "The money means a lot to you."

Lucas shook his head, continuing to reproach himself. "I must have been crazy, lettin' it bother me that-a-way. You wasn't thinkin' about money when you said you'd stay."

Doc came around the table and placed a hand on Lucas' shoulder.

"Come on, let's forget it. I wish Belle and you the best of luck. I suppose I'll often be thinking about the little fellow—wondering what sort of a boy he's growing up to be. For some reason he comes awfully close to me. I—I'd like to see him have a real chance."

A wistful smile played over his lips. His keen gray eyes were sad of a sudden. Lucas looked away, gulping back his own emotion.

"We'll do our best, Doc. Of course if wool and beef prices stay down where they are we won't have a nickel to waste——"

"Don't worry about that. I'm going to leave a little nest egg for him. Bitter Root was all alone; he won't need his share now."

Lucas failed to warm to the offer. Doc saw a perplexed frown settle on his face. "What is it?" he asked.

"I don't want to hurt your feelin's, Doc——"

"Don't worry about that."

"Well—I don't know about the money." Lucas was very unhappy about it. "I was just thinkin' that ain't the kind of a start I want to give the boy. I'd always know the money was stolen——"

The stab made Doc wince. He rolled a cigarette with great deliberation as he communed with himself.

"I guess you're right," he said at last. "I didn't think of that. You and I haven't got the same slant on things any more, Lucas. I hope you never take a crooked dollar. You couldn't look that kid in the eye if you did."

"Then there's no hard feelin's?"

"Not a one! You get my saddle out. I'll be drifting along."

Lucas fetched the things from the storeroom. Doc picked up the heavy saddle-bags.

"Lucas, I'm going to leave these here for an hour or two, if you don't mind. When I come back you can count out what you think is yours."

"When you come back?" Lucas backed off a step and stared at him incredulously. "Why, you're headin' for the Strip, ain't you."

"Not alone, Lucas. I'm going to stick up that posse before it gets out of the hills. I got Little Bill and the others into this jam. It's up to me to get them out of it if I can."

It took Lucas' breath away.

"Doc, don't be a fool!" he pleaded.

"Heck's got six men with him. Seven to one—you can't go up against odds like that and win."

"Two of his men are shot up. Five to one? It's a chance if I can surprise 'em. . . . I'm taking it."

Lucas tried in vain to dissuade him.

"They'll shoot you to pieces, Doc! Don't do this. You haven't got a chance!"

His concern touched Doc, even though it failed to sway him.

"I think I've got a chance," he said lightly enough. "If I guess wrong it will be like Heck said—all over in a hurry." He gave Lucas a reassuring pat on the back. "Come on, let's go! I want you to pick me out a good horse."

In a daze, Lucas followed him to the corral. Doc twitted him about his glumness.

"Why be so gloomy?" he laughed. "You were a lot better company as an outlaw than you are as an honest man, Lucas. I've turned tougher tricks than this."

He seemed so sure of himself that Lucas could only gaze at him with inarticulate amazement. A hundred reasons occurred to him why Doc should not turn back. If he did not voice them it was only because he realized that no reason could stay him now.

The grays were the best horses in the corral. Doc looked them over with a critical eye. His own mount edged up to him. The big palomino seemed to be fresh enough after the rest it had had.

"I'll take him, Lucas. I know him pretty well. You have one of the grays saddled and waiting for me when I get back. I may need him in a hurry."

The horse was quickly saddled. Doc asked questions about the country below the ranch. He was principally interested in a short-cut to a dry farmer's abandoned shack at the foot of the switch-backs. He would make his play there.

"Well, so long, Lucas!"

Lucas put a detaining hand on his saddlehorn.

"I don't suppose you'd forget all this even if you knew your life depended on it."

Doc shook his head.

"No, I'd have to go through with it. They would do it for me. You did it yourself once. It doesn't square anything, but it's the only excuse I have left for being an outlaw." He pulled his Stetson low over his forehead. "Just have the gray ready, Lucas."

He was gone then. Lucas stared after him until the chaparral hid him.

"I'll have him ready, Doc," he murmured stonily. "I—I hope you'll be needin' him."

V. ROUNDED UP IN GLORY

LUCAS DID NOT RETURN to the house at once. A chill had crept into the night air. It cooled his fevered brow. He found himself able to think clearly again.

The horses had not been watered. He opened the irrigation ditch that ran through the corral. In a few minutes it was bank full. He closed the head-gate and looked around as though trying to find something else to do.

He knew Belle was waiting for him; she had overheard what Heck had said about the bank failing. He was anxious to allay her worries.

It occurred to him that Belle might have dropped off to sleep; the long hours of agony she had endured in giving birth to her child had completely exhausted her. It would simplify matters to have Doc come and go again while she slept. The hope pulled him back to the house. He pulled off his boots and tiptoed through the kitchen to find Belle and the baby sound asleep. He closed the bedroom door noiselessly and settled down to wait.

He was not an imaginative man, but at the night wore on and the silence deepened there leaped into his mind the thought that Doc had fooled him—that he did not intend to return. It was ridiculous. And yet, he couldn't put the bulging saddle-bags out of his mind now. A dozen times and more he told himself the money was there. . . . Twenty thousand dollars! He had never seen twenty thousand dollars in one pile. The desire to look at it became overpowering.

He fought it for ten minutes before he got to his feet and opened the storeroom door. The bags were where he had tossed them. With cheeks burning he dropped to his knees and opened them. His eyes bulged as he beheld the crinkly bills and gold coin. It was a stake that would enable a man to take it easy—more than he would have to show after a lifetime of drudgery.

A cold sweat had broken out on his forehead. He counted out the six hundred dollars that represented his savings—thirty twenty-dollar gold pieces! For good measure, he added another. He could hold them in one outstretched hand. It seemed a pitifully small part of the tidy fortune on which he was feasting his eyes.

One of the gold pieces slipped through his fingers. He reached out for it greedily and spilled the rest. He was still retrieving them when the sound of a madly-driven horse broke in on his consciousness.

It was a rude awakening. He scooped the money into the bags

and tried to buckle down the flaps quickly; but his fingers were all thumbs. He didn't want Doc to catch him there. It seemed a lifetime to him before he had the bags closed and the storeroom door shut.

He leaned against it as he caught his breath. He began to realize that Doc must have made good his stand. If he were here, it couldn't mean anything else.

A brief tattoo of flying hoofs rang out as the rider dashed across the wooden bridge over the mother ditch. Lucas stiffened apprehensively. That rhythmic drumming of hoofs heralded the approach of only one horse! Why was Doc returning alone? Where were Little Bill and the others?

Even as he pondered the question he heard the rider pull up his mount and leap to the ground. In his stocking feet, Lucas ran out of the kitchen to meet him. His jaw dropped. This was not Doc. It was Anse—a wild-eyed Anse, so excited he could not speak for a moment.

Lucas was dumfounded. His nerves were so frayed that he flew into a rage. He cursed incoherently as he glared at the man.

"Why don't you say somethin'?" he rasped. "Where have you been? What's wrong with you?"

"Doc Munday—the outlaw—he's been killed!" Anse gasped. "Heck killed him!"

"What——" The news stunned Lucas.

"It just happened—at the old shack where the switchbacks begin," Anse went on. "I was comin' along with old Purdy. I heard the shots. Got there a minute after it happened."

Anse had no way of knowing what his news meant to Lucas, although he saw that it had staggered him.

"Old Purdy was drunk when I got to town," he ran on. "Towards evenin' I got him sobered up. I tossed him into his rig and told him to follow me. We had just got to——"

"Quit jabberin' away 'bout nothin'!" Lucas cut him off fiercely. "Did you talk to Heck? Tell me what he said if you did!"

"I talked to all of 'em," Anse informed him importantly. "None of 'em thought Munday was within ten miles of the shack. They was just movin' easy, walkin' their horses. They was about a hundred yards from the cabin when the horse Little Bill was ridin' neighed. There wasn't any answer, but Heck pulled up short. It was a dead giveaway, that horse neighin' like that. Heck circled around to one side of the house; two of his men went the other way. Doc stood his ground. He began to blaze away at the two deputies. He burned both of them. Heck called on him to throw

up his hands. Doc answered by throwin' down on him; but he was too late. Heck got him dead center."

Anse had all the details. He went on relentlessly.

"Couldn't find hide nor hair of the money though. Heck figures Doc cached it somewheres. May be years before anybody stumbles onto it——"

Lucas hardly heard him. Doc was dead; he couldn't get beyond that. Over and over he said to himself, "This never would have happened if he'd not stopped to help us."

With leaden feet he turned toward the kitchen.

Anse had anticipated sitting up for an hour or two discussing the events of the night. He couldn't understand Lucas' white-faced silence.

"Hear we got a new member of the family," he ventured. "Heck told Purdy he wasn't needed here now. Plenty work for him down below——"

"Put your horse up and go to bed," Lucas ordered. He stepped into the kitchen and closed the door.

"Hunh!" Anse grumbled disgustedly as he started across the yard for his one-room cabin beyond the corrals. "Wonder what's eatin' him."

His high-pitched nasal whine had awakened Belle. She was sitting up when Lucas came in. There were tears in her eyes. She had heard Anse's news.

With shoulders drooping, Lucas shuffled into the room and sank down beside her on the bed. A sob shook him. He would not meet her eyes. Belle wrapped her fingers about his horny hand.

"I'm crying too, Lucas," she murmured chokingly.

Lucas nodded, still looking away. "Gave his life for us," he got out thickly. "Goin' back was his own business. Reckon he had to—the way he figured things. If he hadn't stopped at all, Belle, he would have got away."

"Don't you think I know it?" she sobbed. "Poor, foolish man. . . . Our money may be gone, Lucas, but we never can hold that against him."

Lucas said nothing, but Belle had stirred a thought in his mind that was like a knife in him. What Anse had said about the missing money came back to mock him.

"Belle——" He got no further. He wanted to tell her the twenty thousand dollars was in the storeroom—that it had been there all the time. But he couldn't put it into words; couldn't take her into his confidence only to have her tell him it must be returned at once. He wanted time to think this over.

Half an hour later he found himself alone in the kitchen again. Belle had promised to go back to sleep. He got out his pipe and tried to compose his mind to ordered thinking. But it was no go; he couldn't keep the pipe going nor could he think of anything but that Doc was dead and the fortune he had stolen was there, in the storeroom.

The longer he considered keeping the money, the safer it appeared. It was after two o'clock now. He went to the door and glanced across the yard at Anse's cabin. No light showed. Anse had long since gone to bed.

"I'd have to bury the money before daylight," he told himself. He began to cast around in his mind for the most likely place. There was a spring a quarter of a mile below the house where the water seeped down into the creek. He could dig down two or three feet in the black ooze and hide the money. His cattle would quickly erase any trace of his work, because they liked to stand there, mired to the knees in the wet muck.

Although in a fever of impatience to have the work over with, he still hesitated, afraid lest he had overlooked some damaging possibility that might give him away.

He found none. Heck might suspect him; Little Bill and the others might ask for an accounting when they came out of prison. But nothing could come of that; no one ever could be sure he had taken the money.

That decided it. Moving as stealthily as a thief he edged toward the storeroom. He got the door open and picked up the saddle-bags. He started to toss them over his shoulder, but the feel of them sent a shiver through him and he paused abruptly.

Unconsciously he cowered against the wall. It was as though someone had surprised him—Belle, for instance. But he was quite alone. And yet as he stared with gathering awe at the bags, he seemed to see Doc's level gray eyes boring into his, rebuking him for what he was about to do.

"The sooner I get this over with the better," he muttered doggedly. "Be breakin' day before I get finished."

There was relief in the thought that it soon would be morning. These specters could not stalk him by day. He tossed the bags over his shoulders and started for the door.

He had taken only a step or two when the baby began to cry. It was a startling interruption, so intent had Lucas been on getting out of the house. The shrill wail rose to a mighty avalanche of sound that struck fear in him. He stopped in his tracks. A baby? . . . For a moment he was at a loss to understand how a baby came

to be there. A groan was wrung from him as the truth flashed in his mind.

"Your son!" conscience prodded. "Tonight a man tossed away his life to bring him into the world. He was to be proud of you. . . . You were to give him the right sort of a start——"

Lucas brushed a hand across his damp forehead. A baffled look settled on his face.

"My God, I forgot all about him," he muttered desperately. He let the saddle-bags slip to the floor. "I—reckon I can't do this. It would be just like Doc said—I couldn't look him in the eye."

He repeated Doc's words. Suddenly the desire to make his decision irrevocable took possession of him.

"Belle!" he cried. "Belle——" Snatching up the bags he ran into the bedroom to fall on his knees beside her. "The money—I got it! It's all here!"

Weak as she was, Belle managed to rise on her elbow to stare at him anxiously. "Lucas, what is it?" His face frightened her. "We said we wouldn't worry——"

"No, Belle, you don't understand. The money they took from the bank. It's in these saddle-bags. No one knows but me."

Understanding began to dawn in Belle's eyes. Intuitively she sensed the cause of his agitation. Her face paled. "Lucas—you weren't thinking of keeping——"

"Yes, I was!" He raised his head and gazed at her defiantly. "You thought I was all through with that stuff, eh? Well, you were wrong! There's twenty thousand dollars here. All I could think of was how easy it was going to make it for you and me. And then the baby began to cry. I'd forgotten about him." His voice broke and he couldn't go on for a moment. "I thought of Doc, throwin' his life away for the kid; of what he said—and I couldn't take the money. I—I want that kid to be proud of me!"

Belle's eyes were misting. "We'll both be proud of you," she whispered.

Four hours later Lucas sat with Heck in the sheriff's tiny office in the rear of the court-house in Hayes City. He told his story without reservation. When he finished, Heck swung around in his swivel chair to stare with unseeing eyes across the plaza.

Lucas had come through for him. He couldn't get over that, although he hid his emotion with a scowl that belied the warm glow of satisfaction stealing through his veins.

"It makes everythin' I've done worth while," he mused.

But it wasn't only of Lucas that he was thinking. There was

Doc. Nothing could glorify outlawry in his eyes, but he could appreciate what Doc had done in ordering his men to ride on. It couldn't be dismissed as only a gallant gesture.

"He knew the chance he was takin'," he thought. "I don't know anyone else who'd have taken it. Doc was all wrong about a lot of things, but I've got to take my hat off to him for this."

He swung back in his chair to gaze at Lucas. He scowl had gone.

"Lucas," he murmured humbly, "I've always said outlaw was only another name for a fool. I've got to amend that a little in Doc's case. Fool he was—but what a glorious fool!"

Ernest Haycox

Weight of Command

DAYLIGHT was a violet pulse in the low east when the trumpets blew boots and saddles; and now the cavalry regiment moved in a sluggish serpentine line along the left bank of Lost Warrior Creek. Men rode stiff in the saddles, sulky and slow-witted from sleep; they rode in dismal silence. The white tops of the supply wagons emitted a vague glow; bare buttes and ridges slowly lifted from the night, from the desert's black sweep.

Cheadrick—Colonel William Starr Cheadrick—tarried briefly behind to have a last word with General Gibson, who commanded this expedition. For as the cavalry regiment moved out along Lost Warrior Creek three regiments of infantry were at the same time disappearing over a low ridge to the right, the two arms of the service embarking upon a nutcracker movement intended to close the hostile Sioux within its jaws.

Gibson was a dark and acrid little man, a sardonic beau sabreur on whose shoulders the single brigadier's star showed the tarnish of hard service. "You are," he said, "to continue up Lost Warrior Creek to its major fork and swing left, to cut the Sioux trail and make contact. I will be forty miles away from you at the far point of my swing, thereafter closing in. I'll meet you on the third morning. If you come upon Sioux in any considerable strength don't let them get away or we'll have all this dismal business to do over again. If it looks like a fight . . ." and he paused and shrugged his shoulders. "You're too old a campaigner to be given restrictive orders. I leave it to your judgment whether to attack or to wait for me. Good luck."

The two men shook hands. Gibson forded the creek and pursued the infantry with his aide and his orderlies behind him. Cheadrick set his horse into a slow gallop and overtook his command. The smell of extinguished campfires hung to the creek bottom, and all along the cavalry column a fine alkali dust boiled up. Cheadrick was sixty-two years old, better than six feet tall, and rode with his legs full down. He had spent most of his career in the saddle, so that the smell of horses and dust and leather was the principal smell

of his life; he was a stringy, severe shape, with raw-boned shoulders and a silver-white goatee and mustache. He wore an old campaign hat with the brim tipped up, and his eyes, always half closed against sun and light, were agate-gray. There was but one definite mark of age on this cavalry commander—the two parallel streaks between chin and throat bottom. This, the skin on the colonel's throat, was loose and grizzled.

He passed the wagon train, viewing the mules for condition. He passed the troops one by one and saw a trooper's saddle blanket to be poorly folded. He checked in at once: "Drop out and refold that blanket. You'll gall your horse before ten o'clock." At the head of the column he pulled to a steady walk beside his civilian guide, Major Conn, and the correspondent from the Chicago paper. And now for Cheadrick the campaign had begun.

At eight o'clock the last bit of moisture had evaporated from the air. Sunlight glared on the monotonous flats of sage. The correspondent from Chicago said: "You know this country, Colonel?"

"Yes," said Cheadrick, "I know it."

He was tallying his regiment as a poker player would consider the laws of chance in a deck of cards. He had five hundred men, half of them good soldiers, half of them recruits from Jefferson Barracks. He had a set of tough noncoms, the backbone of his command. He had some good officers; he had a few who were green; he had some who were the sweepings of the Civil War. He had only one major, this Major Conn who rode heavily and choleric beside him, with a mind blurred by drink. Callahan, his senior captain, was half wild from slowness of promotion and might, in a pinch, throw away fifty men for the sake of making a reputation. Somewhere out in front of him the Sioux moved restlessly back and forth, stirred by their war chiefs and armed with repeating rifles that were better than the carbines of his own command.

This was how Cheadrick weighed his orders, the ability of his regiment, the enemy in front. This was what command meant, this insistent consideration of a hundred changing elements. At sixty-two it was a burden that added fifty pounds to his body and kept him awake at night and formed his mouth into a long, thin line. It was a thing you couldn't tell anybody; it was something only an old man knew, after years of experience.

At ten o'clock the full heat of the sun burned against exposed skin and flashed on metal gear, and dust rolled around them in cloudy billows. The advance guard rode a mile ahead, a line of flankers moved far out to either side of the column, and thus the

regiment marched, a complete and self-contained unit on the face of emptiness.

Behind him the column slowly came alive from its morning's taciturnity; men were talking, men were laughing. Down in F troop Jack Studenburg said: "How does a woman get along when a man's away? Now I wonder."

Corporal Kanipe said: "There's other men."

"Now," grumbled Studenburg, "I could cut your heart out for puttin' the thought in my mind." He looked at Kistmiller in the file closers. "How you bettin' on that baby, Sarge?"

"A boy," answered Kistmiller, and said no more.

The column began to sing, and Cheadrick, listening to it, felt pleased. He liked his men to sweat and eat dust and grow lank-muscled and quarrelsome, because that meant they had the vital salt of soldiering in them. He liked them to sing, for in singing he felt them pull together, he caught the unity and the single will of the command.

Cheadrick sent his scout detail into the southeast and listened to their reports on returning. At noon the command halted beside Lost Warrior Creek on the treeless plain, and was in motion again by one; fifty minutes of march and ten for rest, on through the piled-up haze, through a thin air and a furnace-blast heat, through a dust that collected on eyebrows in white drifts and stung the nostrils and settled as grit between shirt collar and flesh. Cheadrick sent the details out, one by one; they curled into the southeast and came back with their little sums of information, and at seven o'clock the regiment reached the major fork of Lost Warrior Creek and camped with the shadow of low hills fifteen miles ahead.

Cook fires burned pure yellow triangles into the enveloping dusk. The wagon train etched a broken line against the horizon, and men, bone-tired, murmured and lay still. The crunch of feeding horses, the tramp of the sentries, the shine of lanterns—all these details came to Cheadrick as he sat before his tent and debated with the civilian guide.

"They're coming out of the north and east," he said, "and meeting somewhere in the southeast."

The civilian guide said: "Beyond the second bunch of hills. There's a couple of high ridges, with a valley and Ash Creek flowin' between. It's been a meetin' spot of the Sioux for as long as I can remember."

"In considerable numbers. They've got their women along."

"They'll fight if you surprise 'em—because they got their women."

"How many would you guess?"

'Big party. Maybe a thousand—maybe two."

Coolness stirred on the desert. Cheadrick went into the tent and sat before the camp table, writing a letter to his wife. It was his lifelong habit to write something each evening when on campaign so that when his wife got the letters, back at Fort Lincoln, she would have the daily story. He wrote in a heavy, flowing hand and folded the letter and returned to the camp chair under the fly to catch some of the evening's coolness. Silence came to the camp, and five hundred men were sleeping, or lying awake with their memories and their dreams—and all these men's lives rested on a single command or one forward motion of his arm.

The ten o'clock call ran the sentry line and the last lights began to wink out, and sage and dust smell rolled steadily through camp, and coyotes were lifting their half howl and half yip along the desert, and mystery swept in from the dark horizons—the mystery of space and wildness. Cheadrick pulled off his pants and rolled into his blankets and lay awake. He remembered that Sergeant Kistmiller had a wife in Fort Lincoln expecting a baby. He remembered the trumpeter of L troop whose mother wanted his release. He thought about the company clerk of D, a man of education hiding his past in a uniform. Of this material was his regiment made. Each man had a life, but all those lives were at his disposal. This was the meaning, the stark responsibility of command.

In his tent Major Conn took a drink and rolled into bed with a grunt of fatigue and thought vaguely of the past and still more vaguely of the future. In the tent at the head of M troop, Captain Lewis Callahan said to Captain Van Horn: "This regiment could lick all the Indians on the plains. One charge would end this Sioux problem forever. All I want is just one chance at independent action. I'll take my troop through."

By the sallow glow of his candle the Chicago newspaper correspondent was writing:

"Five hundred men fall asleep tonight with the assurance they are one day nearer a meeting with the Sioux. That is a certainty rising from the caliber of the man in command of this regiment, Colonel William Starr Cheadrick. No man better knows Indians, no man is better equipped to find them and defeat them.

"Colonel Cheadrick is a six-foot, rawboned, ageless cavalryman, weaned on gunpowder and dust and toughened by violent action. He is cold, autocratic. He wastes no words and seemingly lacks the grace of human compassion. The troopers call him Vinegar Bill, sotto voce, and they fear his eye and grumble at his discipline. Yet

fear him as they will, they sleep the sounder for knowing he is in command, for they know that, although he might lead them straight to perdition if he thought it in line of duty, he would never make a charge out of folly or pride. He is like nothing so much in the world as an old, tough hickory cask impregnated with the salts and bitter flavors of a thousand cargoes safely held."

By three o'clock the following day the regiment moved around the base of the low hill and faced three on-running ridges, roughly parallel; beyond them a smoky haze covered everything. All scouting parties had brought back one uniform story. Every sign indicated a concentration of bands somewhere in the southeast. Pony tracks showed everywhere through those hills; the main column itself had been crossing these tracks since noon. The civilian guide said: "We're gettin' warm."

Major Conn rode beside Cheadrick, the vein-netted surface of his face irritable for want of a drink. This, thought Cheadrick, was his second in command, an officer whose mind was filled with alcoholic vapors—inefficient and undependable. He called up Captain Callahan from the column and observed the rash gleam in Callahan's eyes, there was no caution in the man. Cheadrick said:

"I'm going down that central valley between the two ridges. Conn, you take two companies and swing into the ravine on the right of me. You will also take two companies, Callahan, and bear to the left. You will both be marching parallel to the main command. Watch sharp. Throw out advance parties. At seven o'clock cross over and join me. Do you understand?"

Cheadrick let the silence ride on, reviewing his orders to see that they were clear. Then he added: "If you meet Sioux and are offered a fight—refuse it. Come back at once."

Riding forward, Cheadrick watched Conn and Callahan take out their respective details to right and left. In a little while the high jaws of the narrow valley received the main column and Conn and Callahan disappeared.

The right ridge threw long shadows into the narrow valley; along the slope of both ridges were mounds of shale and rock and fine coverts of sage and juniper. Cheadrick's advance guard was too far ahead; he sent the trumpeter forward to pull it back. On right and left ridge the flankers were having trouble with the stiff grade. He beckoned up an orderly. "Tell them to climb to the backbone of those ridges." Heat lay solidly between the walls of this rock-sided valley; it was a kind of tissue through which Cheadrick pushed himself and his horse.

The correspondent from the Chicago paper lagged slightly behind to observe Cheadrick's face, for the correspondent fancied himself a keen judge of character. The regiment, he realized, was nearing decisive action. Behind him troopers sat upright on their saddles, and their faces veered from one ridge top to another, carefully searching. But Cheadrick rode flinty and serene, with his lids brought almost together and his head motionless. The correspondent tried to build up proper descriptive phrases: "He feels nothing, fears nothing, cares for nothing except his job. He has looked at death and duty for so long that the minor sensibilities, like love or compassion, or the capacity for excitement, have been utterly destroyed. An ageless, tireless mechanism of bone and impervious hide and granite resolution." The correspondent thought it an excellent description that would look well in print.

The colonel, at this moment, was thinking of his long-past boyhood in Vermont—the smell of cut hay and the steady swing of his father's scythe, and the cook jug of sugar water in the shade of the rock fence. He was thinking of evening in the farmhouse when, with day's work done, he had sprawled on his belly and listened to his people talking—and he remembered how free and secure he had been, without care. That remembrance of golden irresponsibility was very strong.

At five the command halted for ten minutes. At six it turned a bend of the valley and faced a closure of the ridges and a low pass. Beyond the pass was a flare of sulphurous sunlight and thick heat smoke and the outline of other distant ridges. By seven they had crossed the pass and found a minor creek. Ahead of them was another sagebrush flat; across that flat, twelve miles distant, a low, short ridge—more like a butte—made a parapet against the horizon. Cheadrick said to the adjutant, "We camp here," and dismounted. An orderly took his horse away. Cheadrick sat on the ground, his back to a high boulder. He pulled his hat over his eyes, but he watched the country behind him with heavy attention, and part of the strain of this long day dropped from his shoulders when he saw Conn come down the rocky draws.

Callahan didn't appear for another hour. When he reported in, Cheadrick's voice struck him like an axe: "Hereafter, remember your orders or I'll relieve you of your command." There was no other way to grind the sense of exact duty into the soul of a careless officer.

Tents went up in regular pattern along the sagebrush, and the cook fires were burning livid holes through the blue swirl of dusk.

A guard detail tramped by, and watering details went to the creek and returned, and the troops' horses stood picketed on each troop street. The civilian guide came back from his own private survey.

"They'll be yonder, Colonel," he said. "Beyond that ridge. It's the old meetin' ground. You got twelve, fourteen miles to go."

Cheadrick stripped to his undershirt and went to the creek to wash, and ate the hardtack and salt bacon and coffee brought by his orderly. He asked for a can of hot water and shaved by the pale spire of his tent candle, the sound of the razor like sandpaper against sandpaper. He wrote his nightly letter to his wife and returned to the front of the tent and sat in his camp chair, his long legs crossed and a stogie upward tilted between his teeth.

Lights went out one by one in the tents around him. Stillness swept off the ancient earth, and at last these five hundred men slept, each with his ambitions and his dreams and his sorrows; and all these men, with full freight of their lives, would move into the slash of gunfire at the sweep of his hand. Their lives were at his disposition, to be expended or saved as he saw fit. All that he had learned in the long years of his trade, all his watching and thinking, his self-denial of pride, would be squeezed into one single decision when morning broke.

He went into his tent and took off his boots and pulled a blanket over him. He put his watch beside him and said aloud, "Midnight," and pinched out the candlelight; and he lay there, listening to the camp settle, listening to the minor suspirations of the earth about him. His legs were hard with weariness, and the weight of the day was still on his chest; at last he slept.

At midnight he was awake, summoned by the mental alarm he had set; and he drew on his boots and stepped to the tent door and dispatched the guard for the adjutant. The adjutant came up in his undershirt, still half asleep. Cheadrick said: "We break camp at once."

At one the column moved forward without breakfast, and men rode lumped and taciturn in their saddles, and the white tops of the supply train glowed in the ink-stained shadows, and dust rose again. At two the column halted briefly and went on. At three the forward ridge began to grow and lift out of the plain. Eastward a long streak indicated soon-coming day. Cheadrick said to the adjutant: "Curtis' troop and McPherson's troop will guard the supply train. We will go ahead. Tell them to keep coming." The column stepped out at a longer pace; the ground began to lift and break into the first slopes of the ridge. Cheadrick said: "I remember this hill. There's an easy climb close by."

Cheadrick cantered forward with the civilian guide until the stiffer incline of the ridge brought him to a walk. They quartered the ridge, climbing to a crest littered by broken rock. The summit was nothing more than a thin wedge, and from this vantage point he saw the pale glitter of a creek in the valley below and a long row of conical shadows. This was a half mile onward, westward. Out of the valley's stillness came the irritable barking of an Indian dog.

The guide said: "There's your Sioux."

The head of the column came laboriously up the slope. Cheadrick spoke to the adjutant: "We occupy this position. Extend the line to the left. Send back a courier to the supply train. They will come up as far as the first bench. McPherson and Curtis will take up a position at the wagons."

One sudden ragged wedge of light broke through the eastern rim and widened. Cheadrick buttoned his blouse against the thin chill of the morning and watched the ten troops file along the brow of the hill. They were dismounting; horse holders moved back from the parapet. A raw voice said: "Better eat yere hardtack now, Johnny. We'll be swarmin' into that valley in a half hour." Cheadrick watched the supply train buckle and twist its way up the incline toward the first bench. Troopers attached towropes to the wagons for the extra pull. Light shot across the sky suddenly. Turning around, Cheadrick watched day drop into the Indian village. Tepees lay in round-arranged units all along the creek, and smoke spiraled from the village, and women moved toward the creek. He had made his contact.

Conn and Callahan came up. The civilian guide said in a conversational voice: "They see us."

A woman ran back from the creek, and then all the women were running, and men appeared and raced for their horses. Horses and warriors broke through the village toward the creek. At this distance the Sioux warriors were dark, bare bodies, lank and flimsy on the ponies' backs. The guide said: "Big village. Thousand braves."

The warriors were gathering; they slashed across the creek and made irregular clusters. They stopped and seemed to be waiting.

Conn said in his husky voice: "The question's being put. To attack or run. I wish I had a cup of coffee."

Callahan's face was red and his eyes hung to Cheadrick and he was nervous, with the nervousness of wild hope. He said: "It takes two jaws to make a nutcracker. We're one, but where's the other? If they run we've lost them."

Cheadrick watched the Sioux arrange themselves. Warriors still streamed out of the village, galloping across the creek. A division

took place before Cheadrick's attentive eyes; part of the warriors broke away and started around the ridge at a dead gallop. The guide said: "They want to see whut we got on the other side."

Cheadrick said to Callahan: "Return to your battalion, sir."

As Callahan walked along the narrow ridge toward the extreme left of the strung-out regimental line he spoke bitterly under his breath: "I never expected to see the day when a regiment of United States Cavalry ran up a hill and permitted itself to be surrounded by a scurvy bunch of savages!"

Cheadrick watched the wagons arrive on the lower bench. Teamsters sprang down to unhitch, and the two covering troops of McPherson and Curtis were taking a line in the rocks; and when that defense was completed a part of the heavy care dropped from Cheadrick's shoulders. Nobody but an old man with a long memory of the disaster of split commands really knew what it meant to have the regiment in a compact fighting unit.

Presently Sioux swept around the base of the ridge and stopped to look at the wagon train's position. Cheadrick took a stogie from his pocket and lighted it and watched the Indians for a full five minutes, then put his attention on the main group of warriors in the valley. Those warriors were still waiting; they formed a wall between soldiers and squaws, and now the squaws, having the camp hitched to pony-drawn travois, were retreating toward the south end of the valley. The valley was no more than a mile broad, with low hills semicircularly closing it in on the far side. Cheadrick, sweeping those hills with an anxious eye, saw no infantry column breaking over them. Where was Gibson?

Gibson had said: "Keep them in hand until I come up, for if they scatter on us they'll play merry hell before we catch up with them again." There was a long-running burst of rifle echoes behind Cheadrick, and he looked around to see the Indians opposite the wagon train sweeping along the base of the ridge, parallel to the wagons. They fired as they raced by, and when they had passed the wagons they doubled back in another running line and fired again. All these shots would fall short; they had to get closer to do damage. Cheadrick thought: "The longer they have their fun the better it is." For the longer they delayed departure the nearer Gibson would be.

It was eight o'clock, and the sun was a low bright ball in the east and the rocks began to take on heat. The firing ceased, and the Indians in that quarter swept around the edge of the ridge to rejoin the main body of Sioux. The squaws were halfway up the valley, their departure marked by streaky runners of dust; presently

the Sioux warriors slowly retreated across the creek and followed the squaws.

A thousand good fighting Sioux in that bunch, Cheadrick thought; they were slowly slipping away from him, and there was no sign of Gibson. Cheadrick put a fresh match to his stogie. He had five hundred men. If he took them down it would be a hell of a scrap. He had fought Indians a long time, and he knew the quality of those Sioux when they turned to defend their women with brand-new repeating rifles. But the summer was about done, and if the Sioux got away now there would be a long winter campaign and additional troops in the field and heavy casualties from a dozen running engagements. Casualties now, in a decisive engagement, would be better than casualties and a long-dragged-out campaign later. Gibson had said: "I leave it to your judgment."

Cheadrick spoke to the trumpeter. "Horses," he said. The trumpeter tossed up his instrument and flung that brief, peremptory summons through the day's heating stillness, and all along the ridge horse holders moved forward and men heaved up to the saddles. Cheadrick said to his orderly: "Bring up Captain McPherson's troop. Curtis will stay with the wagons." The orderly ducked down the hill slope.

The Chicago correspondent sat on his horse, and one hand rubbed the smooth top of his .45, which he had never before used, and he looked at the colonel and he thought: "No nerves, no sentiment. The man's a block of ice."

McPherson's troop grunted its way up the slope and fell into line. Cheadrick abandoned his stogie. The squaws were near the head of the valley, about to climb through the yonder pass. The warriors followed at a distance, forming a rear guard. There was no sign of Gibson.

Cheadrick moved his horse toward the middle of the long line, followed by his adjutant and his bugler and his orderly. The color sergeants had uncased the colors; they were close behind him. Cheadrick looked to either side of him, at this regiment he had built up by his care and discipline and affection. He saw the troopers, their sun-blackened jaws, their faces now hard-drawn by excitement. All these saddles were full, but many of them in another quarter hour would be empty. Kistmiller had pulled his hat down over his eyes, and he sat forward on the leather, alert and tough and wise in the kind of soldiering that would be presently needed; he saw G troop's boy trumpeter and remembered the lad had a girl back at the post.

The colonel pulled the strap of his hat beneath his chin. It would

have been nice to have taken the regiment back to the post intact, to have returned all these men to their women and their families, to the small and easy ways of life that were so sweet. This was what an old man thought when he sat at the head of his regiment. He took a grip on his reins, made a slow forward motion with his arm, and started down the slope at a walk, the long line of the regiment bellying and bowing behind him as it struck the steep pitch.

The Sioux warriors had halted their retreat. They were swinging around and breaking out of their compact formations. They were wheeling into individual fighting groups and stretching across the valley, awaiting the cavalry. The colonel took a professional look at the creek, estimated the possibilities of a small grove of willows near by, and mentally made his plans. The Sioux would fight their own way, which would be to flank his command; they were starting that wide-racing sweep already.

Half down the slope Cheadrick saw dust boil thicker at the head of the valley. Squaws and pony-drawn travois were turning back. Something rolled them back from the little pass up there, but the dust made a screen he couldn't see through. He came down to the valley's edge, the regiment in column of companies. There was a commotion among the warriors; they were recoiling from their flanking movement; they were rushing back toward the squaws. In a moment Cheadrick saw the sinuous glitter of guns in the pass. That would be Gibson.

Cheadrick said, "Gallop," and splashed over the creek. He wasn't aiming at the warriors; he was well behind them as he crossed the valley and plugged the lower end of it to block escape in that direction. The regiment was like a stopper in a bottle. Cheadrick brought the companies into front line. He said: "McPherson—take your company out to make a flank at the base of those hills." McPherson's company rushed away.

Out on the plain, squaws and warriors came together in a confusion of dust, and halted, Gibson's column poured through the pass, marching steadily forward; from this distance Cheadrick saw the column break into three smaller columns, each one forking out on the flat earth.

Presently the columns stopped. A group of Indians rode slowly from the main body and lifted their hands in signal of defeat. Gibson was riding up with his staff.

Cheadrick said, "Conn, take command," and trotted out to meet Gibson.

Gibson had stopped before the warriors. He was still in the saddle when Cheadrick came up; he was waiting for Cheadrick. Dust sil-

vered his coat, and the sharp, acrid face of the man was a gray mask of alkali streaked with ragged sweat. Cheadrick reined in and made his salute. He was a stiff, autocratic shape in the sunlight; the upturned brim of his hat and the silver goatee and mustache gave him a cavalryman's flair.

"Well, Gibson," said Cheadrick, "here's your Sioux."

Gibson said, "Well done," and extended his hand. When Cheadrick took that hand he met Gibson's eyes and he knew that Gibson understood the strain of the past hours—for Gibson, too, had been through it. Nobody else would know; but Gibson did, and that was reward enough, the silent applause of one old commander to another. Weight slid from Cheadrick's shoulders. He remembered Kistmiller, and it was a fine, clean feeling to know he would be returning Kistmiller to his wife and new baby. The day was hot but the heat was good for his old bones, and some of the snap and resilience of his younger years returned to him.

Gibson said: "Where's the interpreter? I want to start this band back to the reservation."

It was a tremendous climax to the Chicago correspondent who stood aside to chronicle the meeting of these two men; and a tremendous anti-climax. Watching Cheadrick, he thought: "Unsentimental and untouched. Moved neither by excitement nor the thought of defeat nor the consummation of a bloodless peace. The man's a machine—but what a machine!"

Bret Harte

The Idyl of Red Gulch

SANDY was very drunk. He was lying under an azalea bush, in pretty much the same attitude in which he had fallen some hours before. How long he had been lying there he could not tell, and didn't care; how long he should lie there was a matter equally indefinite and unconsidered. A tranquil philosophy, born of his physical condition, suffused and saturated his moral being.

The spectacle of a drunken man, and of this drunken man in particular, was not, I grieve to say, of sufficient novelty in Red Gulch to attract attention. Earlier in the day some local satirist had erected a temporary tombstone at Sandy's head, bearing the inscription, "Effects of McCorkle's whisky—kills at forty rods," with a hand pointing to McCorkle's saloon. But this, I imagine, was, like most local satire, personal; and was a reflection upon the unfairness of the process rather than a commentary upon the impropriety of the result. With this facetious exception, Sandy had been undisturbed. A wandering mule, released from his pack, had cropped the scant herbage beside him, and sniffed curiously at the prostrate man; a vagabond dog, with that deep sympathy which the species have for drunken men, had licked his dusty boots, and curled himself up at his feet, and lay there, blinking one eye in the sunlight, with a simulation of dissipation that was ingenious and doglike in its implied flattery of the unconscious man beside him.

Meanwhile the shadows of the pine-trees had slowly swung around until they crossed the road, and their trunks barred the open meadow with gigantic parallels of black and yellow. Little puffs of red dust, lifted by the plunging hoofs of passing teams, dispersed in a grimy shower upon the recumbent man. The sun sank lower and lower, and still Sandy stirred not. And then the repose of this philosopher was disturbed, as other philosophers have been, by the intrusion of an unphilosophical sex.

"Miss Mary," as she was known to the little flock that she had just dismissed from the log schoolhouse beyond the pines, was taking her afternoon walk. Observing an unusually fine cluster of blossoms on the azalea bush opposite, she crossed the road to pluck

it, picking her way through the red dust, not without certain fierce little shivers of disgust and some feline circumlocution. And then she came suddenly upon Sandy!

Of course she uttered the little *staccato* cry of her sex. But when she had paid that tribute to her physical weakness she became overbold, and halted for a moment—at least six feet from this prostrate monster—with her white skirts gathered in her hand, ready for flight. But neither sound nor motion came from the bush. With one little foot she then overturned the satirical headboard, and muttered "Beasts!" an epithet which probably, at that moment, conveniently classified in her mind the entire male population of Red Gulch. For Miss Mary, being possessed of certain rigid notions of her own, had not, perhaps, properly appreciated the demonstrative gallantry for which the Californians had been so justly celebrated by his brother Californians, and had, as a new-comer, perhaps fairly earned the reputation of being "stuck up."

As she stood there she noticed, also, that the slant sunbeams were heating Sandy's head to what she judged to be an unhealthy temperature, and that his hat was lying uselessly at his side. To pick it up and to place it over his face was a work requiring some courage, particularly as his eyes were open. Yet she did it and made good her retreat. But she was somewhat concerned, on looking back, to see that the hat was removed, and that Sandy was sitting up and saying something.

The truth was, that in the calm depths of Sandy's mind he was satisfied that the rays of the sun were beneficial and healthful; that from childhood he had objected to lying down in a hat; that no people but condemned fools, past redemption, ever wore hats; and that his right to dispense with them when he pleased was inalienable. This was the statement of his inner consciousness. Unfortunately, its outward expression was vague, being limited to a repetition of the following formula: "Su'shine all ri'! Wasser maär, eh? Wass up, su'shine?"

Miss Mary stopped, and, taking fresh courage from her vantage of distance, asked him if there was anything that he wanted.

"Wass up? Wasser maär?" continued Sandy, in a very high key.

"Get up, you horrid man!" said Miss Mary, now thoroughly incensed; "get up, and go home."

Sandy staggered to his feet. He was six feet high, and Miss Mary trembled. He started forward a few paces, and then stopped.

"Wass I go home for?" he suddenly asked, with great gravity.

"Go and take a bath," replied Miss Mary, eying his grimy person with great disfavor.

To her infinite dismay, Sandy suddenly pulled off his coat and vest, threw them on the ground, kicked off his boots, and, plunging wildly forward, darted headlong over the hill, in the direction of the river.

"Goodness Heavens!—the man will be drowned!" said Miss Mary; and then, with feminine inconsistency, she ran back to the schoolhouse, and locked herself in.

That night, while seated at supper with her hostess, the blacksmith's wife, it came to Miss Mary to ask, demurely, if her husband ever got drunk. "Abner," responded Mrs. Stidger, reflectively, "let's see! Abner hasn't been tight since last 'lection." Miss Mary would have liked to ask if he preferred lying in the sun on these occasions, and if a cold bath would have hurt him; but this would have involved an explanation, which she did not then care to give. So she contented herself with opening her gray eyes widely at the red-cheeked Mrs. Stidger—a fine specimen of Southwestern efflorescence—and then dismissed the subject altogether. The next day she wrote to her dearest friend, in Boston: "I think I find the intoxicated portion of this community the least objectionable. I refer, my dear, to the men, of course. I do not know anything that could make the women tolerable."

In less than a week Miss Mary had forgotten this episode, except that her afternoon walks took thereafter, almost unconsciously, another direction. She noticed, however, that every morning a fresh cluster of azalea blossoms appeared among the flowers on her desk. This was not strange, as her little flock were aware of her fondness for flowers, and invariably kept her desk bright with anemones, syringas, and lupines; but on questioning them they one and all professed ignorance of the azaleas. A few days later, Master Johnny Stidger, whose desk was nearest to the window, was suddenly taken with spasms of apparently gratuitous laughter, that threatened the discipline of the school. All that Miss Mary could get from him was that some one had been "looking in the winder." Irate and indignant, she sallied from her hive to do battle with the intruder. As she turned the corner of the schoolhouse she came plump upon the quondam drunkard, now perfectly sober, and inexpressibly sheepish and guilty-looking.

These facts Miss Mary was not slow to take a feminine advantage of, in her present humor. But it was somewhat confusing to observe, also, that the beast, despite some faint signs of past dissipation, was amiable-looking,—in fact, a kind of blond Samson, whose corn-colored silken beard apparently had never yet known the touch of barber's razor or Delilah's shears. So that the cutting speech which quivered on her ready tongue died upon her lips, and

she contented herself with receiving his stammering apology with supercilious eyelids and the gathered skirts of uncontamination. When she reëntered the schoolroom, her eyes fell upon the azaleas with a new sense of revelation. And then she laughed, and the little people all laughed, and they were all unconsciously very happy.

It was on a hot day—and not long after this—that two short-legged boys came to grief on the threshold of the school with a pail of water, which they had laboriously brought from the spring, and that Miss Mary compassionately seized the pail and started for the spring herself. At the foot of the hill a shadow crossed her path, and a blue-shirted arm dexterously but gently relieved her of her burden. Miss Mary was both embarrassed and angry. "If you carried more of that for yourself," she said spitefully, to the blue arm, without deigning to raise her lashes to its owner, "you'd do better." In the submissive silence that followed she regretted the speech, and thanked him so sweetly at the door that he stumbled. Which caused the children to laugh again—a laugh in which Miss Mary joined, until the color came faintly into her pale cheek. The next day a barrel was mysteriously placed beside the door, and as mysteriously filled with fresh spring-water every morning.

Nor was this superior young person without other quiet attentions. "Profane Bill," driver of the Slumgullion Stage, widely known in the newspapers for his "gallantry" in invariably offering the box-seat to the fair sex, had excepted Miss Mary from this attention, on the ground that he had a habit of "cussin' on up grades," and gave her half the coach to herself. Jack Hamlin, a gambler, having once silently ridden with her in the same coach, afterward threw a decanter at the head of a confederate for mentioning her name in a barroom. The over-dressed mother of a pupil whose paternity was doubtful had often lingered near this astute Vestal's temple, never daring to enter its sacred precincts, but content to worship the priestess from afar.

With such unconscious intervals the monotonous procession of blue skies, glittering sunshine, brief twilights, and starlit nights passed over Red Gulch. Miss Mary grew fond of walking in the sedate and proper woods. Perhaps she believed, with Mrs. Stidger, that the balsamic odors of the firs "did her chest good," for certainly her slight cough was less frequent and her step was firmer; perhaps she had learned the unending lesson which the patient pines are never weary of repeating to heedful or listless ears. And so, one day, she planned a picnic on Buckeye Hill, and took the children with her. Away from the dusty road, the straggling shanties, the yellow ditches, the clamor of restless engines, the cheap finery of

shop-windows, the deeper glitter of paint and colored glass, and the thin veneering which barbarism takes upon itself in such localities—what infinite relief was theirs! The last heap of ragged rock and clay passed, the last unsightly chasm crossed—how the waiting woods opened their long files to receive them! How the children—perhaps because they had not yet grown quite away from the breast of the bounteous Mother—threw themselves face downward on her brown bosom with uncouth caresses, filling the air with their laughter; and how Miss Mary herself—felinely fastidious and intrenched as she was in the purity of spotless skirts, collar, and cuffs—forgot all, and ran like a crested quail at the head of her brood, until romping, laughing, and panting, with a loosened braid of brown hair, a hat hanging by a knotted ribbon from her throat, she came suddenly and violently, in the heart of the forest, upon the luckless Sandy!

The explanations, apologies, and not overwise conversation that ensued need not be indicated here. It would seem, however, that Miss Mary had already established some acquaintance with this ex-drunkard. Enough that he was soon accepted as one of the party: that the children, with that quick intelligence which Providence gives the helpless, recognized a friend, and played with his blond beard and long silken mustache, and took other liberties—as the helpless are apt to do. And when he had built a fire against a tree, and had shown them other mysteries of woodcraft, their admiration knew no bounds. At the close of two such foolish, idle, happy hours he found himself lying at the feet of the schoolmistress, gazing dreamily in her face, as she sat upon the sloping hillside, weaving wreaths of laurel and syringa, in very much the same attitude as he had lain when first they met. Nor was the similitude greatly forced. The weakness of an easy, sensuous nature, that had found a dreamy exaltation in liquor, it is to be feared was now finding an equal intoxication in love.

I think that Sandy was dimly conscious of this himself. I know that he longed to be doing something—slaying a grizzly, scalping a savage, or sacrificing himself in some way for the sake of this sallow-faced, gray-eyed schoolmistress. As I should like to present him in a heroic attitude, I stay my hand with great difficulty at this moment, being only withheld from introducing such an episode by a strong conviction that it does not usually occur at such times. And I trust that my fairest reader, who remembers that, in a real crisis, it is always some uninteresting stranger or unromantic policeman, and not Adolphus, who rescues, will forgive the omission.

So they sat there, undisturbed, the woodpeckers chattering overhead, and the voices of the children coming pleasantly from the hollow below. What they said matters little. What they thought—which might have been interesting—did not transpire. The woodpeckers only learned how Miss Mary was an orphan; how she left her uncle's house, to come to California, for the sake of health and independence; how Sandy was an orphan, too; how he came to California for excitement; how he had lived a wild life, and how he was trying to reform; and other details, which, from a woodpecker's view-point, undoubtedly must have seemed stupid and a waste of time. But even in such trifles was the afternoon spent; and when the children were again gathered, and Sandy, with a delicacy which the schoolmistress well understood, took leave of them quietly at the outskirts of the settlement, it had seemed the shortest day of her weary life.

As the long, dry summer withered to its roots, the school term of Red Gulch—to use a local euphuism—"dried up" also. In another day Miss Mary would be free; and for a season, at least, Red Gulch would know her no more. She was seated alone in the schoolhouse, her cheek resting on her hand, her eyes half closed in one of those day-dreams in which Miss Mary, I fear, to the danger of school discipline, was lately in the habit of indulging. Her lap was full of mosses, ferns, and other woodland memories. She was so preoccupied with these and her own thoughts that a gentle tapping at the door passed unheard, or translated itself into the remembrance of far-off woodpeckers. When at last it asserted itself more distinctly, she started up with a flushed cheek and opened the door. On the threshold stood a woman, the self-assertion and audacity of whose dress were in singular contrast to her timid, irresolute bearing.

Miss Mary recognized at a glance the dubious mother of her anonymous pupil. Perhaps she was disappointed, perhaps she was only fastidious; but as she coldly invited her to enter, she half unconsciously settled her white cuffs and collar, and gathered closer her own chaste skirts. It was, perhaps, for this reason that the embarrassed stranger, after a moment's hesitation, left her gorgeous parasol open and sticking in the dust beside the door, and then sat down at the farther end of a long bench. Her voice was husky as she began:—

"I heerd tell that you were goin' down to the Bay to-morrow, and I couldn't let you go until I came to thank you for your kindness to my Tommy."

Tommy, Miss Mary said, was a good boy, and deserved more than the poor attention she could give him.

"Thank you, miss; thank ye!" cried the stranger, brightening even through the color which Red Gulch knew facetiously as her "war paint," and striving, in her embarrassment, to drag the long bench nearer the schoolmistress. "I thank you, miss, for that; and if I am his mother, there ain't a sweeter, dearer, better boy lives than him. And if I ain't much as says it, thar ain't a sweeter, dearer, angeler teacher lives than he's got."

Miss Mary, sitting primly behind her desk, with a ruler over her shoulder, opened her gray eyes widely at this, but said nothing.

"It ain't for you to be complimented by the like of me, I know," she went on, hurriedly. "It ain't for me to be comin' here, in broad day, to do it, either; but I come to ask a favor—not for me, miss—not for me, but for the darling boy."

Encouraged by a look in the young school mistress's eye, and putting her lilac-gloved hands together, the fingers downward, between her knees, she went on, in a low voice:—

"You see, miss, there's no one the boy has any claim on but me, and I ain't the proper person to bring him up. I thought some, last year, of sending him away to 'Frisco to school, but when they talked of bringing a schoolma'am here I waited till I saw you, and then I knew it was all right, and I could keep my boy a little longer. And oh, miss, he loves you so much; and if you could hear him talk about you, in his pretty way, and if he could ask you what I ask you now, you couldn't refuse him.

"It is natural," she went on rapidly, in a voice that trembled strangely between pride and humility—"it's natural that he should take to you, miss, for his father, when I first knew him, was a gentleman—and the boy must forget me, sooner or later—and so I ain't a goin' to cry about that. For I come to ask you to take my Tommy—God bless him for the bestest, sweetest boy that lives—to—to—take him with you."

She had risen and caught the young girl's hand in her own, and had fallen on her knees beside her.

"I've money plenty, and it's all yours and his. Put him in some good school, where you can go and see him, and help him to—to—to forget his mother. Do with him what you like. The worst you can do will be kindness to what he will learn with me. Only take him out of this wicked life, this cruel place, this home of shame and sorrow. You will! I know you will—won't you? You will—you must not, you cannot say no! You will make him as pure, as gentle, as yourself; and when he has grown up, you will tell him

his father's name,—the name that hasn't passed my lips for years,—the name of Alexander Morton, whom they call here Sandy! Miss Mary!—do not take your hand away! Miss Mary, speak to me! You will take my boy? Do not put your face from me. I know it ought not to look on such as me. Miss Mary!—my God, be merciful!—she is leaving me!"

Miss Mary had risen, and, in the gathering twilight, had felt her way to the open window. She stood there, leaning against the casement, her eyes fixed on the last rosy tints that were fading from the western sky. There was still some of its light on her pure young forehead, on her white collar, on her clasped white hands, but all fading slowly away. The suppliant had dragged herself, still on her knees, beside her.

"I know it takes time to consider. I will wait here all night; but I cannot go until you speak. Do not deny me now. You will!—I see it in your sweet face—such a face as I have seen in my dreams. I see it in your eyes, Miss Mary!—you will take my boy!"

The last red beam crept higher, suffused Miss Mary's eyes with something of its glory, flickered, and faded, and went out. The sun had set on Red Gulch. In the twilight and silence Miss Mary's voice sounded pleasantly.

"I will take the boy. Send him to me to-night."

The happy mother raised the hem of Miss Mary's skirts to her lips. She would have buried her hot face in its virgin folds, but she dared not. She rose to her feet.

"Does—this man—know of your intention?" asked Miss Mary suddenly.

"No, nor cares. He has never even seen the child to know it."

"Go to him at once—tonight,—now! Tell him what you have done. Tell him I have taken his child, and tell him—he must never see—see—the child again. Wherever it may be, he must not come; wherever I may take it, he must not follow! There, go now, please,—I'm weary, and—have much yet to do!"

They walked together to the door. On the threshold the woman turned.

"Good-night!"

She would have fallen at Miss Mary's feet. But at the same moment the young girl reached out her arms, caught the sinful woman to her own pure breast for one brief moment, and then closed and locked the door.

It was with a sudden sense of great responsibility that Profane Bill took the reins of the Slumgullion Stage the next morning, for the schoolmistress was one of his passengers. As he entered the high-

road, in obedience to a pleasant voice from the "inside," he suddenly reined up his horses and respectfully waited, as "Tommy" hopped out at the command of Miss Mary.

"Not that bush, Tommy,—the next."

Tommy whipped out his new pocket-knife, and, cutting a branch from a tall azalea bush, returned with it to Miss Mary.

"All right now?"

"All right!"

And the stage-door closed on the Idyl of Red Gulch.

Stewart Edward White

Buried Treasure

I. THE OLD TIMER

JUST AT DUSK one afternoon we finished cutting the herd which our morning's drive had collected. The stray-herd, with its new additions from the day's work, we pushed rapidly into one big stock corral. The cows and unbranded calves we urged into another. Fifty head of beef steers found asylum from dust, heat, and racing to and fro, in the mile square wire enclosure called the pasture. All the remainder, for which we had no further use, we drove out of the flat into the brush and toward the distant mountains. Then we let them go as best pleased them.

By now the desert had turned slate-coloured, and the brush was olive green with evening. The hard, uncompromising ranges, twenty miles to eastward, had softened behind a wonderful veil of purple and pink, vivid as the chiffon of a girl's gown. To the south and southwest the Chiricahuas and Dragoons were lost in thunderclouds which flashed and rumbled.

We jogged homewards, our cutting ponies, tired with the quick, sharp work, shuffling knee deep in a dusk that seemed to disengage itself and rise upwards from the surface of the desert. Everybody was hungry and tired. At the chuck-wagon we threw off our saddles and turned the mounts into the remuda. Some of the wisest of us, remembering the thunder-clouds, stacked our gear under the veranda roof of the old ranch-house.

Supper was ready. We seized the tin battery, filled the plates with the meat, bread, and canned corn, and squatted on our heels. The food was good, and we ate hugely in silence. When we could hold no more we lit pipes. Then we had leisure to notice that the storm-cloud was mounting in a portentous silence to the zenith, quenching the brilliant desert stars.

"Rolls" were scattered everywhere. A roll includes a cowboy's bed and all of his personal belongings. When the outfit includes a bed-wagon, the roll assumes bulky proportions.

As soon as we had come to a definite conclusion that it was going to rain, we deserted the camp-fire and went rustling for our blankets. At the end of ten minutes every bed was safe within the

doors of the abandoned adobe ranch-house, each owner recumbent on the floor-claim he had pre-empted, and every man hoping fervently that he had guessed right as to the location of leaks.

Ordinarily we had depended on the light of camp-fires, so now artificial illumination lacked. Each man was indicated by the alternately glowing and waning lozenge of his cigaret fire. Occasionally some one struck a match, revealing for a moment high-lights on bronzed countenances, and the silhouette of a shading hand. Voices spoke disembodied. As the conversation developed, we gradually recognized the membership of our own roomful. I had forgotten to state that the ranch-house included four chambers. Outside, the rain roared with Arizona ferocity. Inside, men congratulated themselves, or swore as leaks developed and localized.

Naturally we talked first of stampedes. Cows and bears are the two great cattle-country topics. Then we had a mouth-organ solo or two, which naturally led on to songs. My turn came. I struck up the first verse of a sailor chantey as possessing at least the interest of novelty:

> Oh, once we were a-sailing, a-sailing were we,
> *Blow high, blow low, what care we;*
> And we were a-sailing to see what we could see,
> *Down on the coast of the High Barbaree.*

I had just gone so far when I was brought up short by a tremendous oath behind me. At the same instant a match flared. I turned to face a stranger holding the little light above his head, and peering with fiery intentness over the group sprawled about the floor.

He was evidently just in from the storm. His dripping hat lay at his feet. A shock of straight, close-clipped vigorous hair stood up gray above his seamed forehead. Bushy iron-gray eyebrows drawn close together thatched a pair of burning, unquenchable eyes. A square, deep jaw, lightly stubbled with gray, was clamped so tight that the cheek muscles above it stood out in knots and welts.

Then the match burned his thick, square fingers, and he dropped it into the darkness that ascended to swallow it.

"Who was singing that song?" he cried harshly. Nobody answered.

"Who was that singing?" he demanded again.

By this time I had recovered from my first astonishment.

"I was singing," said I.

Another match was instantly lit and thrust into my very face. I

underwent the fierce scrutiny of an instant, then the taper was thrown away half consumed.

"Where did you learn it?" the stranger asked in an altered voice.

"I don't remember," I replied; "it is a common enough deep-sea chantey."

A heavy pause fell. Finally the stranger sighed.

"Quite like," he said; "I never heard but one man sing it."

"Who in hell are you?" someone demanded out of the darkness.

Before replying, the newcomer lit a third match, searching for a place to sit down. As he bent forward, his strong, harsh face once more came clearly into view.

"He's Colorado Rogers," the Cattleman answered for him; "I know him."

"Well," insisted the first voice, "what in hell does Colorado Rogers mean by bustin' in on our song *fiesta* that way?"

"Tell them, Rogers," advised the Cattleman, "tell them—just as you told it down on the Gila ten years ago next month."

"What?" inquired Rogers. "Who are you?"

"You don't know me," replied the Cattleman, "but I was with Buck Johnson's outfit then. Give us the yarn."

"Well," agreed Rogers, "pass over the 'makings' and I will."

He rolled and lit a cigaret, while I revelled in the memory of his rich, great voice. It was of the sort made to declaim against the sea or the rush of rivers or, as here, the fall of waters and the thunder—full, from the chest, with the caressing throat vibration that gives colour to the most ordinary statements. After ten words we sank back oblivious of the storm, forgetful of the leaky roof and the dirty floor, lost in the story told us by the Old Timer.

II. THE TEXAS RANGERS

I CAME FROM TEXAS, like the bulk of you punchers, but a good while before the most of you were born. That was forty-odd years ago—and I've been on the Colorado River ever since. That's why they call me Colorado Rogers. About a dozen of us came out together. We had all been Texas Rangers, but when the war broke out we were out of a job. We none of us cared much for the Johnny Rebs, and still less for the Yanks, so we struck overland for the West, with the idea of hitting the California diggings.

Well, we got switched off one way and another. When we got down to about where Douglas is now, we found that the Mexican Government was offering a bounty for Apache scalps. That looked pretty good to us, for Injin chasing was our job, so we started in to

collect. Did pretty well, too, for about three months, and then the Injins began to get too scarce, or too plenty in streaks. Looked like our job was over with, but some of the boys discovered that Mexicans, having straight black hair, you couldn't tell one of their scalps from an Apache's. After that the bounty business picked up for a while. It was too much for me, though, and I quit the outfit and pushed on alone until I struck the Colorado about where Yuma is now.

At that time the California immigrants by the southern route used to cross just there, and these Yuma Injins had a monopoly on the ferry business. They were a peaceful, fine-looking lot, without a thing on but a gee-string. The women had belts with rawhide strings hanging to the knees. They put them on one over the other until they didn't feel too decollotey. It wasn't until the soldiers came that the officers' wives got them to wear handkerchiefs over their breasts. The system was all right, though. They wallowed around in the hot, clean sand, like chickens, and kept healthy. Since they took to wearing clothes they've been petering out, and dying of dirt and assorted diseases.

They ran this ferry monopoly by means of boats made of tules, charged a scand'lous low price, and everything was happy and lovely. I ran on a little bar and panned out some dust, so I camped a while, washing gold, getting friendly with the Yumas, and talking horse and other things with the immigrants.

About a month of this, and the Texas boys drifted in. Seems they sort of overdid the scalp matter, and got found out. When they saw me, they stopped and went into camp. They'd traveled a heap of desert, and were getting sick of it. For a while they tried gold washing, but I had the only pocket—and that was about skinned. One evening a fellow named Walleye announced that he had been doing some figuring, and wanted to make a speech. We told him to fire ahead.

"Now look here," said he, "what's the use of going to California? Why not stay here?"

"What in hell would we do here?" someone asked. "Collect Gila monsters for their good looks?"

"Don't get gay," said Walleye. "What's the matter with going into business? Here's a heap of people going through, and more coming every day. This ferry business could be made to pay big. Them Injins charges two bits a head. That's a crime for the only way across. And how much do you suppose whisky'd be worth to drink after that desert? And a man's so sick of himself by the time

he gets this far that he'd play chuck-a-luck, let alone faro or monte."

That kind of talk hit them where they lived, and Yuma was founded right then and there. They hadn't any whisky yet, but cards were plenty, and the ferry monopoly was too easy. Walleye served notice on the Injins that a dollar a head went; and we all set to building a tule raft like the others. Then the wild bunch got uneasy, so they walked upstream one morning and stole the Injins' boats. The Injins came after them innocent as babies, thinking the raft had gone adrift. When they got into camp our men opened up and killed four of them as a kind of hint. After that the ferry company didn't have any trouble. The Yumas moved up river a ways, where they've lived ever since. They got the corpses and buried them. That is, they dug a trench for each one and laid poles across it, with a funeral pyre on the poles. Then they put the body on top, and the women of the family cut their hair off and threw it on. After that they set fire to the outfit, and, when the poles had burned through, the whole business fell into the trench of its own accord. It was the neatest, automatic, self-cocking, double-action sort of a funeral I ever saw. There wasn't any ceremony—only crying.

The ferry business flourished at prices which were sometimes hard to collect. But it was a case of pay or go back, and it was a tur'ble long ways back. We got us timbers and made a scow; built a *baile* and saloon and houses out of adobe; and called her Yuma, after the Injins that had really started her. We got our supplies through the Gulf of California, where sailing boats worked up the river. People began to come in for one reason or another, and first thing we knew we had a store and all sorts of trimmings. In fact we was a real live town.

III. THE SAILOR WITH ONE HAND

AT THIS MOMENT the heavy beat of the storm on the roof ceased with miraculous suddenness, leaving the outside world empty of sound save for the *drip, drip, drip* of eaves. Nobody ventured to fill in the pause that followed the stranger's last words, so in a moment he continued his narrative.

We had every sort of people with us off and on, and, as I was lookout at a popular game, I saw them all. One evening I was on my way home about two o'clock of a moonlit night, when on the edge of the shadow I stumbled over a body lying part across the footway. At the same instant I heard the rip of steel through cloth

and felt a sharp stab in my left leg. For a minute I thought some drunk had used his knife on me, and I mighty near derringered him as he lay. But somehow I didn't, and looking closer, I saw the man was unconscious. Then I scouted to see what had cut me, and found that the fellow had lost a hand. In place of it he wore a sharp steel hook. This I had tangled up with and gotten well pricked.

I dragged him out into the light. He was a slim-built young fellow, with straight black hair, long and lank and oily, a lean face, and big hooked nose. He had on only a thin shirt, a pair of rough wool pants, and the rawhide home-made *zapatos* the Mexicans wore then instead of boots. Across his forehead ran a long gash, cutting his left eyebrow square in two.

There was no doubt of his being alive, for he was breathing hard, like a man does when he gets hit over the head. It didn't sound good. When a man breathes that way he's mostly all gone.

Well, it was really none of my business, as you might say. Men got batted over the head often enough in those days. But for some reason I picked him up and carried him to my 'dobe shack, and laid him out and washed his cut with sour wine. That brought him to. Sour wine is fine to put a wound in shape to heal, but it's no soothing syrup. He sat up as though he'd been touched with a hot poker, stared around wild-eyed, and cut loose with that song you were singing. Only it wasn't that verse. It was another one further along, that went like this:

> Their coffin was their ship, and their grave it was the sea,
> *Blow high, blow low, what care we;*
> And the quarter that we gave them was to sink them in the sea,
> *Down on the coast of the High Barbaree.*

It fair made my hair rise to hear him, with the big, still, solemn desert outside, and the quiet moonlight, and the shadows, and him sitting up straight and gaunt, his eyes blazing each side his big eagle nose, and his snaky hair hanging over the raw cut across his head. However, I made out to get him bandaged up and in shape; and pretty soon he sort of went to sleep.

Well, he was clean out of his head for nigh two weeks. Most of the time he lay flat on his back staring at the pole roof, his eyes burning and looking like they saw each one something a different distance off, the way crazy eyes do. That was when he was best. Then again he'd sing that Barbaree song until I'd go out and look at the Colorado flowing by just to be sure I hadn't died and gone below. Or else he'd just talk. That was the worst performance of

all. It was like listening to one end of a telephone, though we didn't know what telephones were in those days. He began when he was a kid, and he gave his side of conversations, pausing for replies. I could mighty near furnish the replies sometimes. It was a queer lingo—about ships and ships' officers and gales and calms and fights and pearls and whales and islands and birds and skies. But it was all little stuff. I used to listen by the hour, but I never made out anything really important as to who the man was, or where he'd come from, or what he'd done.

At the end of the second week I came in at noon as per usual to fix him up with grub. I didn't pay any attention to him, for he was quiet. As I was bending over the fire he spoke. Usually I didn't bother with his talk, for it didn't mean anything, but something in his voice made me turn. He was lying on his side, those black eyes of his blazing at me, but now both of them saw the same distance.

"Where are my clothes?" he asked, very intense.

"You ain't in any shape to want clothes," said I. "Lie still."

I hadn't any more than got the words out of my mouth before he was atop me. His method was a winner. He had me by the throat with his hand, and I felt the point of the hook pricking the back of my neck. One little squeeze—. Talk about your deadly weapons!

But he'd been too sick and too long abed. He turned dizzy and keeled over, and I dumped him back on the bunk. Then I put my six-shooter on.

In a minute or so he came to.

"Now, you're a nice, sweet proposition," said I, as soon as I was sure he could understand me. "Here I pick you up on the street and save your worthless carcass, and the first chance you get you try to crawl my hump. Explain."

"Where's my clothes?" he demanded again, very fierce.

"For heaven's sake," I yelled at him, "what's the matter with you and your old clothes? There ain't enough of them to dust a fiddle with anyway. What do you think I'd want with them? They're safe enough."

"Let me have them," he begged.

"Now, look here," said I, "you can't get up today. You ain't fit."

"I know," he pleaded, "but let me see them."

Just to satisfy him I passed over his old duds.

"I've been robbed," he cried.

"Well," said I, "what did you expect would happen to you lying around Yuma after midnight with a hole in your head?"

"Where's my coat?" he asked.

"You had no coat when I picked you up," I replied.

He looked at me mighty suspicious, but didn't say anything more—wouldn't even answer when I spoke to him. After he'd eaten a fair meal he fell asleep. When I came back that evening the bunk was empty and he was gone.

I didn't see him again for two days. Then I caught sight of him quite a ways off. He nodded at me very sour, and dodged around the corner of the store.

"Guess he suspicions I stole that old coat of his," thinks I; and afterwards I found that my surmise had been correct.

However, he didn't stay long in that frame of mind. It was along towards evening, and I was walking on the banks looking down over the muddy old Colorado, as I always liked to do. The sun had just set, and the mountains had turned hard and stiff, as they do after the glow, and the sky above them was a thousand million miles deep of pale green-gold light. A pair of Greasers were ahead of me, but I could see only their outlines, and they didn't seem to interfere any with the scenery. Suddenly a black figure seemed to rise up out of the ground; the Mexican man went down as though he'd been jerked with a string, and the woman screeched.

I ran up, pulling my gun. The Mex was flat on his face, his arms stretched out. On the middle of his back knelt my one-armed friend. And that sharp hook was caught neatly under the point of the Mexican's jaw. You bet he lay still.

I really think I was just in time to save the man's life. According to my belief another minute would have buried the hook in the Mexican's neck. Anyway, I thrust the muzzle of my Colt's into the sailor's face.

"What's this?" I asked.

The sailor looked up at me without changing his position. He was not the least bit afraid.

"This man has my coat," he explained.

"Where'd you get the coat?" I asked the Mex.

"I ween heem at monte off Antonio Curvez," said he.

"Maybe," growled the sailor.

He still held the hook under the man's jaw, but with the other hand he ran rapidly under and over the Mexican's left shoulder. In the half light I could see his face change. The gleam died from his eye; the snarl left his lips. Without further delay he arose to his feet.

"Get up and give it here," he demanded.

The Mexican was only too glad to get off so easy. I don't know

whether he'd really won the coat at monte or not. In any case, he flew *poco pronto,* leaving me and my friend together.

The man with the hook felt the left shoulder of the coat again, looked up, met my eye, muttered something intended to be pleasant, and walked away.

This was in December.

During the next two months he was a good deal about town, mostly doing odd jobs. I saw him off and on. He always spoke to me as pleasantly as he knew how, and once made some sort of a bluff about paying me back for my trouble in bringing him around. However, I didn't pay much attention to that, being at the time almighty busy holding down my card games.

The last day of February I was sitting in my shack smoking a pipe after supper, when my one-armed friend opened the door a foot, slipped in, and shut it immediately. By the time he looked towards me I knew where my six-shooter was.

"That's all right," said I, "but you better stay right there."

I intended to take no more chances with that hook.

He stood there looking straight at me without winking or offering to move.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"I want to make up to you for your trouble," said he. "I've got a good thing, and I want to let you in on it."

"What kind of a good thing?" I asked.

"Treasure," said he.

"H'm," said I.

I examined him closely. He looked all right enough, neither drunk nor loco.

"Sit down," said I—"over there; the other side the table." He did so. "Now, fire away," said I.

He told me his name was Solomon Anderson, but that he was generally known as Handy Solomon, on account of his hook; that he had always followed the sea; that lately he had coasted the west shores of Mexico; that at Guaymas he had fallen in with Spanish friends, in company with whom he had visited the mines in the Sierra Madre; that on this expedition the party had been attacked by Yaquis and wiped out, he alone surviving; that his blanket-mate before expiring had told him of gold buried in a cove of Lower California by the man's grandfather; that the man had given him a chart showing the location of the treasure; that he had sewn this chart in the shoulder of his coat, whence his suspicion of me and his being so loco about getting it back.

"And it's a big thing," said Handy Solomon to me, "for they's

not only gold, but altar jewels and diamonds. It will make us rich, and a dozen like us, and you can kiss the Book on that."

"That may all be true," said I, "but why do you tell me? Why don't you get your treasure without the need of dividing it?"

"Why, mate," he answered, "it's just plain gratitude. Didn't you save my life, and nuss me, and take care of me when I was nigh killed?"

"Look here, Anderson, or Handy Solomon, or whatever you please to call yourself," I rejoined to this, "if you're going to do business with me—and I do not understand yet just what it is you want of me—you'll have to talk straight. It's all very well to say gratitude, but that don't go with me. You've been around here three months, and barring a half-dozen civil words and twice as many of the other kind, I've failed to see any indications of your gratitude before. It's a quality with a hell of a hang-fire to it."

He looked at me sideways, spat, and looked at me sideways again. Then he burst into a laugh.

"The devil's a preacher, if you ain't lost your pin-feathers," said he. "Well, it's this then: I got to have a boat to get there; and she must be stocked. And I got to have help with the treasure, if it's like this fellow said it was. And the Yaquis and cannibals from Tiburon is through the country. It's money I got to have, and it's money I haven't got, and can't get unless I let somebody in as pardner."

"Why me?" I asked.

"Why not?" he retorted. "I ain't see anybody I like better."

We talked the matter over at length. I had to force him to each point, for suspicion was strong in him. I stood out for a larger party. He strongly opposed this as depreciating the shares, but I had no intention of going alone into what was then considered a wild and dangerous country. Finally we compromised. A third of the treasure was to go to him, a third to me, and the rest was to be divided among the men whom I should select. This scheme did not appeal to him.

"How do I know you plays fair?" he complained. "They'll be four of you to one of me; and I don't like it, and you can kiss the Book on that."

"If you don't like it, leave it," said I, "and get out, and be damned to you."

Finally he agreed; but he refused me a look at the chart, saying that he had left it in a safe place. I believe in reality he wanted to be surer of me, and for that I can hardly blame him.

IV. THE MURDER ON THE BEACH

AT THIS MOMENT the cook stuck his head in at the open door.

"Say, you fellows," he complained, "I got to be up at three o'clock. Ain't you *never* goin' to turn in?"

"Shut up, Doctor!" "Somebody kill him!" "Here, sit down and listen to this yarn!" yelled a savage chorus.

There ensued a slight scuffle, a few objections. Then silence, and the stranger took up his story.

I had a chum named Billy Simpson, and I rung him in for friendship. Then there was a solemn, tall Texas young fellow, strong as a bull, straight and tough, brought up fighting Injins. He never said much, but I knew he'd be right there when the gong struck. For fourth man I picked out a German named Schwartz. He and Simpson had just come back from the mines together. I took him because he was a friend of Billy's, and besides was young and strong, and was the only man in town excepting the sailor, Anderson, who knew anything about running a boat. I forgot to say that the Texas fellow was named Denton.

Handy Solomon had his boat all picked out. It belonged to some Basques who had sailed her around from California. I must say when I saw her I felt inclined to renig, for she wasn't more'n about twenty-five feet long, was open except for a little sort of cubby-hole up in the front of her, had one mast, and was pointed at both ends. However, Schwartz said she was all right. He claimed he knew the kind; that she was the sort used by French fishermen, and could stand all sorts of trouble. She didn't look it.

We worked her up to Yuma, partly with oars and partly by sails. Then we loaded her with grub for a month. Each of us had his own weapons, of course. In addition we put in picks and shovels, and a small cask of water. Handy Solomon said that would be enough, as there was water marked down on his chart. We told the gang that we were going trading.

At the end of the week we started, and were out four days. There wasn't much room, what with the supplies and the baggage, for the five of us. We had to curl up 'most anywheres to sleep. And it certainly seemed to me that we were in lots of danger. The waves were much bigger than she was, and splashed on us considerable, but Schwartz and Anderson didn't seem to mind. They laughed at us. Anderson sang that song of his, and Schwartz told us of the placers he had worked. He and Simpson had made a pretty good clean-up, just enough to make them want to get rich. The first day

out Simpson showed us a belt with about a hundred ounces of dust. This he got tired of wearing, so he kept it in a compass-box, which was empty.

At the end of the four days we turned in at a deep bay and came to anchor. The country was the usual proposition—very light-brown, brittle-looking mountains, about two thousand feet high; lots of sage and cactus, a pebbly beach, and not a sign of anything fresh and green.

But Denton and I were mighty glad to see any sort of land. Besides, our keg of water was pretty low, and it was getting about time to discover the spring the chart spoke of. So we piled our camp stuff in the small boat and rowed ashore.

Anderson led the way confidently enough up a dry arroyo, whose sides were clay and conglomerate. But, though we followed it to the end, we could find no indications that it was anything more than a wash for rain floods.

"That's main queer," muttered Anderson, and returned to the beach.

There he spread out the chart—the first look at it we'd had—and set to studying it.

It was a careful piece of work done in India ink, pretty old, to judge by the look of it, and with all sorts of pictures of mountains and dolphins and ships and anchors around the edge. There was our bay, all right. Two crosses were marked on the land part—one labelled "*oro*" and the other "*agua*."

"Now there's the high cliff," says Anderson, following it out, "and there's the round hill with the boulder—and if them bearings don't point due for that ravine, the devil's a preacher."

We tried it again, with the same result. A second inspection of the map brought us no light on the question. We talked it over, and looked at it from all points, but we couldn't dodge the truth: the chart was wrong.

Then we explored several of the nearest gullies, but without finding anything but loose stones baked hot in the sun.

By now it was getting towards sundown, so we built us a fire of mesquite on the beach, made us supper, and boiled a pot of beans.

We talked it over. The water was about gone.

"That's what we've got to find first," said Simpson, "no question of it. It's God knows how far to the next water, and we don't know how long it will take us to get there in that little boat. If we run our water entirely out before we start, we're going to be in trouble. We'll have a good look tomorrow, and if we don't find her, we'll run down to Mollyhay [1] and get a few extra casks."

[1] Mulege—I retain the Old Timer's pronunciation.

"Perhaps that map is wrong about the treasure, too," suggested Denton.

"I thought of that," said Handy Solomon, "but then, thinks I to myself, this old rip probably don't make no long stay here—just dodges in and out like, between tides, to bury his loot. He would need no water at the time; but he might when he came back, so he marked the water on his map. But he wasn't noways particular *and* exact, being in a hurry. But you can kiss the Book to it that he didn't make no such mistakes about the swag."

"I believe you're right," said I.

When we came to turn in, Anderson suggested that he should sleep aboard the boat. But Billy Simpson, in mind perhaps of the hundred ounces in the compass-box, insisted that he'd just as soon as not. After a little objection Handy Solomon gave in, but I thought he seemed sour about it. We built a good fire, and in about ten seconds were asleep.

Now, usually I sleep like a log, and did this time until about mid-night. Then all at once I came broad awake and sitting up in my blankets. Nothing had happened—I wasn't even dreaming—but there I was as alert and clear as though it were broad noon.

By the light of the fire I saw Handy Solomon sitting, and at his side our five rifles gathered.

I must have made some noise, for he turned quietly towards me, saw I was awake, and nodded. The moonlight was sparkling on the hard stony landscape, and a thin dampness came out from the sea.

After a minute Anderson threw on another stick of wood, yawned, and stood up.

"It's wet," said he; "I've been fixing the guns."

He showed me how he was inserting a little patch of felt between the hammer and the nipple—a scheme of his own for keeping damp from the powder. Then he rolled up in his blanket. At the time it all seemed quite natural—I suppose my mind wasn't fully awake, for all my head felt so clear. Afterwards I realized what a ridiculous bluff he was making: for of course the cap already on the nipple was plenty to keep out the damp. I fully believe he intended to kill us as we lay. Only my sudden awakening spoiled his plan.

I had absolutely no idea of this at the time, however. Not the slightest suspicion entered my head. In view of that fact, I have since believed in guardian angels. For my next move, which at the time seemed to me absolutely aimless, was to change my blankets from one side of the fire to the other. And that brought me alongside the five rifles.

Owing to this fact, I am now convinced, we awoke safe at daylight, cooked breakfast, and laid the plan for the day. Anderson directed us. I was to climb over the ridge before us and search in the ravine on the other side. Schwartz was to explore up the beach to the left, and Denton to the right. Anderson said he would wait for Billy Simpson, who had overslept in the darkness of the cubby-hole, and who was now paddling ashore. The two of them would push inland to the west until a high hill would give them a chance to look around for greenery.

We started at once, before the sun would be hot. The hill I had to climb was steep and covered with *chollas,* so I didn't get along very fast. When I was about half-way to the top I heard a shot from the beach. I looked back. Anderson was in the small boat, rowing rapidly out to the vessel. Denton was running up the beach from one direction and Schwartz from the other. I slid and slipped down the bluff, getting pretty well stuck up with the *cholla* spines.

At the beach we found Billy Simpson lying on his face, shot through the back. We turned him over, but he was apparently dead. Anderson had hoisted the sail, had cut loose from the anchor, and was sailing away.

Denton stood up straight and tall, looking. Then he pulled his belt in a hole, grabbed my arm, and started to run up the long curve of the beach. Behind us came Schwartz. We ran near a mile, and then fell among some tules in an inlet at the farther point.

"What is it?" I gasped.

"Our only chance—to get him—" said Denton. "He's got to go around this point—big wind—perhaps his mast will bust—then he'll come ashore—" He opened and shut his big brown hands.

So there we two fools lay, like panthers in the tules, taking our only one-in-a-million chance to lay hands on Anderson. Any sailor could have told us that the mast wouldn't break, but we had winded Schwartz a quarter of a mile back. And so we waited, our eyes fixed on the boat's sail, grudging her every inch, just burning to fix things to suit us a little better. And naturally she made the point in what I now know was only a fresh breeze, squared away, and dropped down before the wind toward Guaymas.

We walked back slowly to our camp, swallowing the copper taste of too hard a run. Schwartz we picked up from a boulder, just recovering. We were all of us crazy mad. Schwartz half wept, and blamed and cussed. Denton glowered away in silence. I ground my feet into the sand in a helpless sort of anger, not only at the man himself, but also at the whole way things had turned out. I don't

believe the least notion of our predicament had come to any of us. All we knew yet was that we had been done up, and we were hostile about it.

But at camp we found something to occupy us for the moment. Poor Billy was not dead, as we had supposed, but very weak and sick, and a hole square through him. When we returned he was conscious, but that was about all. His eyes were shut, and he was moaning. I tore open his shirt to stanch the blood. He felt my hand and opened his eyes. They were glazed, and I don't think he saw me.

"Water, water!" he cried.

At that we others saw all at once where we stood. I remember I rose to my feet and found myself staring straight into Tom Denton's eyes. We looked at each other that way for I guess it was a full minute. Then Tom shook his head.

"Water, water!" begged poor Billy.

Tom leaned over him.

"My God, Billy, there ain't any water!" said he.

V. BURIED TREASURE

THE OLD TIMER'S VOICE broke a little. We had leisure to notice that even the drip from the eaves had ceased. A faint, diffused light vouchsafed us dim outlines of sprawling figures and tumbled bedding. Far in the distance outside a wolf yelped.

We could do nothing for him except shelter him from the sun, and wet his forehead with sea-water; nor could we think clearly for ourselves as long as the spark of life lingered in him. His chest rose and fell regularly, but with long pauses between. When the sun was overhead he suddenly opened his eyes.

"Fellows," said he, "it's beautiful over there; the grass is so green; and the water so cool; I am tired of marching, and I reckon I'll cross over and camp."

Then he died. We scooped out a shallow hole above the tide-mark, and laid him in it, and piled over him stones from the wash.

Then we went back to the beach, very solemn, to talk it over.

"Now, boys," said I, "there seems to me just one thing to do, and that is to pike out for water as fast as we can."

"Where?" asked Denton.

"Well," I argued, "I don't believe there's any water about this bay. Maybe there was when that chart was made. It was a long time ago. And anyway, the old pirate was a sailor, and no plainsman, and maybe he mistook rainwater for a spring. We've looked around this

end of the bay. The chances are we'd use up two or three days exploring around the other, and then wouldn't be as well off as we are right now."

"Which way?" asked Denton again, mighty brief.

"Well," said I, "there's one thing I've always noticed in case of folks held up by the desert: they generally go wandering about here and there looking for water until they die not far from where they got lost. And usually they've covered a heap of actual distance."

"That's so," agreed Denton.

"Now, I've always figured that it would be a good deal better to start right out for some particular place, even if it's ten thousand miles away. A man is just as likely to strike water going in a straight line as he is going in a circle; and then, besides, he's getting somewhere."

"Correct," said Denton.

"So," I finished, "I reckon we'd better follow the coast south and try to get to Mollyhay."

"How far is that?" asked Schwartz.

"I don't rightly know. But somewheres between three and five hundred miles, at a guess."

At that he fell to glowering and glooming with himself, brooding over what a hard time it was going to be. That is the way with a German. First off he's plumb scared at the prospect of suffering anything, and would rather die right off than take long chances. After he gets into the swing of it, he behaves as well as any man.

We took stock of what we had to depend on. The total assets proved to be just three pairs of legs. A pot of coffee had been on the fire, but that villain had kicked it over when he left. The kettle of beans was there, but somehow we got the notion they might have been poisoned, so we left them. I don't know now why we were so foolish—if poison was his game, he'd have tried it before—but at that time it seemed reasonable enough. Perhaps the horror of the morning's work, and the sight of the brittle-brown mountains, and the ghastly yellow glare of the sun, and the blue waves racing by outside, and the big strong wind that blew through us so hard that it seemed to blow empty our souls, had turned our judgment. Anyway, we left a full meal there in the beanpot.

So without any further delay we set off up the ridge I had started to cross that morning. Schwartz lagged, sulky as a muley cow, but we managed to keep him with us. At the top of the ridge we took our bearings for the next deep bay. Already we had made up our minds to stick to the sea-coast, both on account of the lower country over which to travel and the off chance of falling in with a

fishing vessel. Schwartz muttered something about its being too far even to the next bay, and wanted to sit down on a rock. Denton didn't say anything, but he jerked Schwartz up by the collar so fiercely that the German gave it over and came along.

We dropped down into the gully, stumbled over the boulder wash, and began to toil in the ankle-deep sand of a little sage-brush flat this side of the next ascent. Schwartz followed steadily enough now, but had fallen forty or fifty feet behind. This was a nuisance, as we had to keep turning to see if he still kept up. Suddenly he seemed to disappear.

Denton and I hurried back to find him on his hands and knees behind a sage-brush, clawing away at the sand like mad.

"Can't be water on this flat," said Denton; "he must have gone crazy."

"What's the matter, Schwartz?" I asked.

For answer he moved a little to one side, showing beneath his knee one corner of a wooden box sticking above the sand.

At this we dropped beside him, and in five minutes had uncovered the whole of the chest. It was not very large, and was locked. A rock from the wash fixed that, however. We threw back the lid.

It was full to the brim of gold coins, thrown in loose, nigh two bushels of them.

"The treasure!" I cried.

There it was, sure enough, or some of it. We looked the chest through, but found nothing but the gold coins. The altar ornaments and jewels were lacking.

"Probably buried in another box or so," said Denton.

Schwartz wanted to dig around a little.

"No good," said I. "We've got our work cut out for us as it is."

Denton backed me up. We were both old hands at the business, had each in our time suffered the "cotton-mouth" thirst, and the memory of it outweighed any desire for treasure.

But Schwartz was money-mad. Left to himself he would have stayed on that sand flat to perish, as certainly as had poor Billy. We had fairly to force him away, and then succeeded only because we let him fill all his pockets to bulging with the coins. As we moved up the next rise, he kept looking back and uttering little moans against the crime of leaving it.

Luckily for us it was winter. We shouldn't have lasted six hours at this time of year. As it was, the sun was hot against the shale and the little stones of those cussed hills. We plodded along until late afternoon, toiling up one hill and down another, only to repeat immediately. Towards sundown we made the second bay, where we

plunged into the sea, clothes and all, and were greatly refreshed. I suppose a man absorbs a good deal that way. Anyhow, it always seemed to help.

We were now pretty hungry, and, as we walked along the shore, we began to look for turtles or shell-fish, or anything else that might come handy. There was nothing. Schwartz wanted to stop for a night's rest, but Denton and I knew better than that.

"Look here, Schwartz," said Denton, "you don't realize you're entered against time in this race—and that you're a damn fool to carry all that weight in your clothes."

So we dragged along all night.

It was weird enough, I can tell you. The moon shone cold and white over that dead, dry country. Hot whiffs rose from the baked stones and hillsides. Shadows lay under the stones like animals crouching. When we came to the edge of a silvery hill we dropped off into pitchy blackness. There we stumbled over boulders for a minute or so, and began to climb the steep shale on the other side. This was fearful work. The top seemed always miles away. By morning we didn't seem to have made much of anywhere. The same old hollow-looking mountains with the sharp edges stuck up in about the same old places.

We had got over being very hungry, and, though we were pretty dry, we didn't really suffer yet from thirst. About this time Denton ran across some fishhook cactus, which we cut up and chewed. They have a sticky wet sort of inside, which doesn't quench your thirst any, but helps to keep you from drying up and blowing away.

All that day we plugged along as per usual. It was main hard work, and we got to that state where things are disagreeable, but mechanical. Strange to say, Schwartz kept in the lead. It seemed to me at the time that he was using more energy than the occasion called for—just as a man runs faster before he comes to the giving-out point. However, the hours went by, and he didn't seem to get any more tired than the rest of us.

We kept a sharp lookout for anything to eat, but there was nothing but lizards and horned toads. Later we'd have been glad of them, but by that time we'd got out of their district. Night came. Just at sundown we took another wallow in the surf, and chewed some more fishhook cactus. When the moon came up we went on.

I'm not going to tell you how dead beat we got. We were pretty tough and strong, for all of us had been used to hard living, but after the third day without anything to eat and no water to drink, it came to be pretty hard going. It got to the point where we had

to have some *reason* for getting out besides just keeping alive. A man would sometimes rather die than keep alive, anyway, if it came only to that. But I made up my mind I was going to get out so I could smash up that Anderson, and I reckon Denton had the same idea. Schwartz didn't say anything, but he pumped on ahead of us, his back bent over and his clothes sagging and bulging with the gold he carried.

We used to travel all night, because it was cool and rest an hour or two at noon. That is all the rest we did get. I don't know how fast we went; I'd got beyond that. We must have crawled along mighty slow, though, after our first strength gave out. The way I used to do was to collect myself with an effort, look around for my bearings, pick out a landmark a little distance off, and forget everything but it. Then I'd plod along, knowing nothing but the sand and shale and slope under my feet, until I'd reached that landmark. Then I'd clear my mind and pick out another.

But I couldn't shut out the figure of Schwartz that way. He used to walk along just ahead of my shoulder. His face was all twisted up, but I remember thinking at the time it looked more as if he was worried in his mind than like bodily suffering. The weight of the gold in his clothes bent his shoulders over.

As we went on the country gradually got to be more mountainous, and, as we were steadily growing weaker, it did seem things were piling up on us. The eighth day we ran out of the fishhook cactus, and, being on a high promontory, were out of touch with the sea. For the first time my tongue began to swell a little. The cactus had kept me from that before. Denton must have been in the same fix, for he looked at me and raised one eyebrow kind of humorous.

Schwartz was having a good deal of difficulty to navigate. I will say for him that he had done well, but now I could see that his strength was going on him in spite of himself. He knew it, all right, for when we rested that day he took all the gold coins and spread them in a row, and counted them, and put them back in his pocket, and then all of a sudden snatched out two handfuls and threw them as far as he could.

"Too heavy," he muttered, but that was all he could bring himself to throw away.

All that night we wandered high in the air. I guess we tried to keep a general direction, but I don't know. Anyway, along late, but before moonrise—she was now on the wane—I came to, and found myself looking over the edge of a twenty-foot drop. Right below me I made out a faint glimmer of white earth in the star-

light. Somehow it reminded me of a little trail I used to know under a big rock back in Texas.

"Here's a trail," I thought, more than half loco; "I'll follow it!"

At least that's what half of me thought. The other half was sensible, and knew better, but it seemed to be kind of standing to one side, a little scornful, watching the performance. So I slid and slipped down to the strip of white earth, and, sure enough, it was a trail. At that the loco half of me gave the sensible part the laugh. I followed the path twenty feet and came to a dark hollow under the rock, and in it a round pool of water about a foot across. They say a man kills himself drinking too much, after starving for water. That may be, but it didn't kill me, and I sucked up all I could hold. Perhaps the fishhook cactus had helped. Well, sir, it was surprising how that drink brought me around. A minute before I'd been on the edge of going plumb loco, and here I was as clear-headed as a lawyer.

I hunted up Denton and Schwartz. They drank themselves full, too. Then we rested. It was mighty hard to leave that spring—

Oh, we had to do it. We'd have starved sure, there. The trail was a game trail, but that did us no good, for we had no weapons. How we did wish for the coffee-pot, so we could take some away. We filled our hats, and carried them about three hours, before the water began to soak through. Then we had to drink it in order to save it.

The country fairly stood up on end. We had to climb separate little hills so as to avoid rolling rocks down on each other. It took it out of us. About this time we began to see mountain sheep. They would come right up to the edges of the small cliffs to look at us. We threw stones at them, hoping to hit one in the forehead, but of course without any results.

The good effects of the water lasted us about a day. Then we began to see things again. Off and on I could see water plain as could be in every hollow, and game of all kinds standing around and looking at me. I knew these were all fakes. By making an effort I could swing things around to where they belonged. I used to do that every once in a while, just to be sure we weren't doubling back, and to look out for real water. But most of the time it didn't seem to be worth while. I just let all these visions riot around and have a good time inside me or outside me, whichever it was. I knew I could get rid of them any minute. Most of the time, if I was in any doubt, it was easier to throw a stone to see if the animals were real or not. The real ones ran away.

We began to see bands of wild horses in the uplands. One day both Denton and I plainly saw one with saddle marks on him. If

only one of us had seen him, it wouldn't have counted much, but we both made him out. This encouraged us wonderfully, though I don't see why it should have. We had topped the high country, too, and had started down the other side of the mountains that ran out on the promontory. Denton and I were still navigating without any thought of giving up, but Schwartz was getting in bad shape. I'd hate to pack twenty pounds over that country even with rest, food, and water. He was toting it on nothing. We told him so, and he came to see it, but he never could persuade himself to get rid of the gold all at once. Instead he threw away the pieces one by one. Each sacrifice seemed to nerve him up for another heat. I can shut my eyes and see it now—the wide, glaring, yellow country, the pasteboard mountains, we three dragging along, and the fierce sunshine flashing from the doubloons as one by one they went spinning through the air.

VI. THE CHEWED SUGAR CANE

"I'D LIKE TO HAVE trailed you fellows," sighed a voice from the corner.

"Would you!" said Colorado Rogers grimly.

It was five days to the next water. But they were worse than the eight days before. We were lucky, however, for at the spring we discovered in a deep wash near the coast, was the dried-up skull of a horse. It had been there a long time, but a few shreds of dried flesh still clung to it. It was the only thing that could be described as food that had passed our lips since breakfast thirteen days before. In that time we had crossed the mountain chain, and had come again to the sea. The Lord was good to us. He sent us the water, and the horse's skull, and the smooth hard beach, without breaks or the necessity of climbing hills. And we needed it, oh, I promise you, we needed it!

I doubt if any of us could have kept the direction except by such an obvious and continuous landmark as the sea to our left. It hardly seemed worth while to focus my mind, but I did it occasionally just by way of testing myself. Schwartz still threw away his gold coins, and once, in one of my rare intervals of looking about me, I saw Denton picking them up. This surprised me mildly, but I was too tired to be very curious. Only now, when I saw Schwartz's arm sweep out in what had become a mechanical movement, I always took pains to look, and always I saw Denton search for the coin. Sometimes he found it, and sometimes he did not.

The figures of my companions and the yellow-brown tide sand under my feet, and a consciousness of the blue and white sea to my left, are all I remember, except when we had to pull ourselves together for the purpose of cutting fishhook cactus. I kept going, and I knew I had a good reason for doing so, but it seemed too much of an effort to recall what that reason was.

Schwartz threw away a gold piece as another man would take a stimulant. Gradually, without really thinking about it, I came to see this, and then went on to sabe why Denton picked up the coins; and a great admiration for Denton's cleverness seeped through me like water through the sand. He was saving the coins to keep Schwartz going. When the last coin went, Schwartz would give out. It all sounds queer now, but it seemed all right then—and it *was* all right, too.

So we walked on the beach, losing entire track of time. And after a long interval I came to myself to see Schwartz lying on the sand, and Denton standing over him. Of course we'd all been falling down a lot, but always before we'd got up again.

"He's give out," croaked Denton.

His voice sounded as if it was miles away, which surprised me, but, when I answered, mine sounded miles away, too, which surprised me still more.

Denton pulled out a handful of gold coins.

"This will buy him some more walk," said he gravely, "but not much."

I nodded. It seemed all right, this new, strange purchasing power of gold—it *was* all right, by God, and as real as buying bricks—

"I'll go on," said Denton, "and send back help. You come after."

"To Mollyhay," said I.

This far I reckon we'd hung onto ourselves because it was serious. Now I began to laugh. So did Denton. We laughed and laughed.

"A damn long way
To Mollyhay,"

said I. Then we laughed some more, until the tears ran down our cheeks, and we had to hold our poor weak sides. Pretty soon we fetched up with a gasp.

"A damn long way
To Mollyhay,"

whispered Denton, and then off we went into more shrieks. And

when we would sober down a little, one or the other of us would say it again:

"A damn long way
To Mollyhay,"

and then we'd laugh some more. It must have been a sweet sight!

At last I realized that we ought to pull ourselves together, so I snubbed up short, and Denton did the same, and we set to laying plans. But every minute or so one of us would catch on some word, and then we'd trail off into rhymes and laughter and repetition.

"Keep him going as long as you can," said Denton.

"Yes."

"And be sure to stick to the beach."

That far it was all right and clear-headed. But the word "beach" let us out.

"I'm a peach
Upon the beach,"

sings I, and there we were both off again until one or the other managed to grope his way back to common sense again. And sometimes we crow-hopped solemnly around and around the prostrate Schwartz like a pair of Injins.

But somehow we got our plan laid at last, and slipped the coins into Schwartz's pocket, and said good-by.

"Old socks, good-by,
You bet I'll try,"

yelled Denton, and laughing fit to kill, danced off up the beach, and out into a sort of gray mist that shut off everything beyond a certain distance from me now.

So I kicked Schwartz, he felt in his pocket, threw a gold piece away, and "bought a little more walk."

My entire vision was fifty feet or so across. Beyond that was gray mist. Inside my circle I could see the sand quite plainly and Denton's footprints. If I moved a little to the left, the wash of the waters would lap under the edge of that gray curtain. If I moved to the right, I came to cliffs. The nearer I drew to them, the farther up I could see, but I could never see to the top. It used to amuse me to move this area of consciousness about to see what I could find. Actual physical suffering was beginning to dull, and my head seemed to be getting clearer.

One day, without any apparent reason, I moved at right angles across the beach. Directly before me lay a piece of sugar cane, and one end of it had been chewed.

Do you know what that meant? Animals don't cut sugar cane and bring it to the beach and chew one end. A new strength ran through me, and actually the gray mist thinned and lifted for a moment, until I could make out dimly the line of cliffs and the tumbling sea.

I was not a bit hungry, but I chewed on the sugar cane, and made Schwartz do the same. When we went on I kept close to the cliff, even though the walking was somewhat heavier.

I remember after that its getting dark and then light again, so the night must have passed, but whether we rested or walked I do not know. Probably we did not get very far, though certainly we staggered ahead after sun-up, for I remember my shadow.

About midday, I suppose, I made out a dim trail leading up a break in the cliffs. Plenty of such trails we had seen before. They were generally made by peccaries in search of cast-up fish—I hope they had better luck than we.

But in the middle of this, as though for a sign, lay another piece of chewed sugar cane.

VII. THE CALABASH STEW

I HAD AGREED with Denton to stick to the beach, but Schwartz could not last much longer, and I had not the slightest idea how far it might prove to be to Mollyhay. So I turned up the trail.

We climbed a mountain ten thousand feet high. I mean that; and I know, for I've climbed them that high, and I know just how it feels, and how many times you have to rest, and how long it takes, and how much it knocks out of you. Those are the things that count in measuring height, and so I tell you we climbed that far. Actually I suppose the hill was a couple of hundred feet, if not less. But on account of the gray mist I mentioned, I could not see the top, and the illusion was complete.

We reached the summit late in the afternoon, for the sun was square in our eyes. But instead of blinding me, it seemed to clear my sight, so that I saw below me a little mud hut with smoke rising behind it, and a small patch of cultivated ground.

I'll pass over how I felt about it: they haven't made the words—

Well, we stumbled down the trail and into the hut. At first I thought it was empty, but after a minute I saw a very old man crouched in a corner. As I looked at him he raised his bleared eyes

to me, his head swinging slowly from side to side as though with a kind of palsy. He could not see me, that was evident, nor hear me, but some instinct not yet decayed turned him toward a new presence in the room. In my wild desire for water I found room to think that here was a man even worse off than myself.

A vessel of water was in the corner. I drank it. It was more than I could hold, but I drank even after I was filled, and the waste ran from the corners of my mouth. I had forgotten Schwartz. The excess made me a little sick, but I held down what I had swallowed, and I really believe it soaked into my system as it does into the desert earth after a drought.

In a moment or so I took the vessel and filled it and gave it to Schwartz. Then it seemed to me that my responsibility had ended. A sudden great dreamy lassitude came over me. I knew I needed food, but I had no wish for it, and no ambition to search it out. The man in the corner mumbled at me with his toothless gums. I remember wondering if we were all to starve there peacefully together—Schwartz and his remaining gold coins, the man far gone in years, and myself. I did not greatly care.

After a while the light was blotted out. There followed a slight pause. Then I knew that someone had flown to my side, and was kneeling beside me and saying liquid, pitying things in Mexican. I swallowed something hot and strong. In a moment I came back from wherever I was drifting, to look up at a Mexican girl about twenty years old.

She was no great matter in looks, but she seemed like an angel to me then. And she had sense. No questions, no nothing. Just business. The only thing she asked of me was if I understood Spanish.

Then she told me that her brother would be back soon, that they were very poor, that she was sorry she had no meat to offer me, that they were *very* poor, that all they had was *calabash*—a sort of squash. All this time she was hustling things together. Next thing I knew I had a big bowl of calabash stew between my knees.

Now, strangely enough, I had no great interest in that calabash stew. I tasted it, sat and thought awhile, and tasted it again. By and by I had emptied the bowl. It was getting dark. I was very sleepy. A man came in, but I was too drowsy to pay any attention to him. I heard the sound of voices. Then I was picked up bodily and carried to an out-building and laid on a pile of skins. I felt the weight of a blanket thrown over me—

I awoke in the night. Mind you, I had practically had no rest at all for a matter of more than two weeks, yet I woke in a few hours. And, remember, even in eating the calabash stew I had felt

no hunger in spite of my long fast. But now I found myself ravenous. You boys do not know what hunger is. It *hurts*. And all the rest of that night I lay awake chewing on the rawhide of a packsaddle that hung near me.

Next morning the young Mexican and his sister came to us early, bringing more calabash stew. I fell on it like a wild animal, and just wallowed in it, so eager was I to eat. They stood and watched me—and, I suppose Schwartz, too, though I had now lost interest in anyone but myself—glancing at each other in pity from time to time.

When I had finished the man told me that they had decided to kill a beef so we could have meat. They were very poor, but God had brought us to them—

I appreciated this afterward. At the time I merely caught at the word "meat." It seemed to me I could have eaten the animal entire, hide, hoofs, and tallow. As a matter of fact, it was mighty lucky they didn't have any meat. If they had, we'd probably have killed ourselves with it. I suppose the calabash was about the best thing for us under the circumstances.

The Mexican went out to hunt up his horse. I called the girl back.

"How far is it to Mollyhay?" I asked her.

"A league," said she.

So we had been near our journey's end after all, and Denton was probably all right.

The Mexican went away horseback. The girl fed us calabash. We waited.

About one o'clock a group of horsemen rode over the hill. When they came near enough I recognized Denton at their head. That man was of tempered steel—

They had followed back along the beach, caught our trail where we had turned off, and so discovered us. Denton had fortunately found kind and intelligent people.

We said good-by to the Mexican girl. I made Schwartz give her one of his gold pieces.

But Denton could not wait for us to say "hullo" even, he was so anxious to get back to town, so we mounted the horses he had brought us, and rode off, very wobbly.

We lived three weeks in Mollyhay. It took us that long to get fed up. The lady I stayed with made a dish of kid meat and stuffed olives—

Why, an hour after filling myself up to the muzzle I'd be hungry again, and scouting round to houses looking for more to eat!

We talked things over a great deal, after we had gained a little

strength. I wanted to take a little flyer at Guaymas to see if I could run across this Handy Solomon person, but Denton pointed out that Anderson would be expecting just that, and would take mighty good care to be scarce. His idea was that we'd do better to get hold of a boat and some water casks, and lug off the treasure we had stumbled over. Denton told us that the idea of going back and scooping all that dinero up with a shovel had kept him going, just as the idea of getting even with Anderson had kept me going. Schwartz said that after he'd carried that heavy gold over the first day, he made up his mind he'd get the spending of it or bust. That's why he hated so to throw it away.

There were lots of fishing boats in the harbour, and we hired one, and a man to run it for next to nothing a week. We laid a course north, and in six days anchored in our bay.

I tell you it looked queer. There were the charred sticks of the fire, and the coffee-pot lying on its side. We took off our hats at poor Billy's grave a minute, and then climbed over the *cholla*-covered hill carrying our picks and shovels, and the canvas sacks to take the treasure away in.

There was no trouble in reaching the sandy flat. But when we got there we found it torn up from one end to the other. A few scattered timbers and three empty chests with the covers pried off alone remained. Handy Solomon had been there before us.

We went back to our boat sick at heart. Nobody said a word. We went aboard and made our Greaser boatman head for Yuma. It took us a week to get there. We were all of us glum, but Denton was the worst of the lot. Even after we'd got back to town and fallen into our old ways of life, he couldn't seem to get over it. He seemed plumb possessed of gloom, and moped around like a chicken with the pip. This surprised me, for I didn't think the loss of money would hit him so hard. It didn't hit any of us very hard in those days.

One evening I took him aside and fed him a drink and expostulated with him.

"Oh, *hell*, Rogers," he burst out, "I don't care about the loot. But, suffering cats, think how that fellow sized us up for a lot of pattern-made fools; and how right he was about it. Why, all he did was to sail out of sight around the next corner. He knew we'd start across country; and we did. All we had to do was to lay low, and save our legs. He was *bound* to come back. And we might have nailed him when he landed."

"That's about all there was to it," concluded Colorado Rogers,

after a pause, "—except that I've been looking for him ever since, and when I heard you singing that song I naturally thought I'd landed."

"And you never saw him again?" asked Windy Bill.

"Well," chuckled Rogers, "I did about ten year later. It was in Tucson. I was in the back of a store, when the door in front opened and this man came in. He stopped at the little cigar-case by the door. In about one jump I was on his neck. I jerked him over backwards before he knew what had struck him, threw him on his face, got my hands in his back-hair, and began to jump his features against the floor. Then all at once I noted that this man had two arms; so of course he was the wrong fellow. "Oh, excuse me," said I, and ran out the back door."

Joseph Henry Jackson

Dick Fellows

I

ONE WONDERS where and how Dick Fellows, perhaps the most unsuccessful bandit that ever roamed California's highways, acquired his passion for horses.

Horses played Dick false at every turn. It was because of a horse that he broke his leg at a crucial moment in his career, thus losing forever the opportunity to go down in history as one of California's really big-time road-agents. If it had not been for a horse, he might once have been nearly a quarter of a million dollars richer. Nobody ever gave Dick a horse he could ride, nor was he able to steal one. Very likely the horse that Dick could ride was never foaled; horses appeared to know him, and to realize the moment they saw him that here was one of those humans they could handle. Horses threw him, ran away with him and from him, led him into trouble and never out of it. Yet this curious bandit-on-horseback never seemed to learn. No matter what horses did to him, he came back for more. In the end it was through a horse that he was finally captured and given the long prison sentence that wound up his brave attempts to lead a life of crime.

It may have been a kind of pride in the man. Tall and strong, with a luxuriant curly black beard, Dick Fellows may have felt that so fine a figure of a robber should not demean himself by traveling on foot, even when bound on a criminal errand. Perhaps it was sheer obstinacy. Once he made up his mind to anything, Dick never seemed to consider such small matters as whether or not he possessed the talents for accomplishing it. On several occasions in his career he advertised himself as "G. Brett Lytle, Professor of Languages," though there is no evidence that he owned to more than a smattering of Spanish. There is no evidence, either, that he got any pupils; though this did not seem to discourage him at all. Or it may have been that his fixation on horseflesh was a consequence of too romantic a temperament. In the literature of banditry, from the old plays and novels down to the latest penny-dreadfuls, a highwayman always had a horse; the beast was part of the picture, as essential an item as the pistol, blunderbuss or shotgun with

which the robber intimidated his victim. And Dick may simply have felt that in order to play his part properly, once he made up his mind to take to the road in earnest, he must use all the trappings of his trade.

At any rate, whatever the reason, this Captain Jinks of California emerges from the ranks of the small fry of his time almost solely because of his persistent error in believing he could ride. Horses were his ruin, but it is because of the part horses played in his curious history that his memory remains green. At least horses did that much for him.

One day some careful student of history will hunt through the old newspapers of Los Angeles County and discover the details of the crime that brought Richard Perkins, *alias* George Brett Lytle, *alias* Dick Fellows, for the first time into the northern part of California.

So far, no one has discovered what was behind the charge of robbery with assault to murder for which Dick was sent to San Quentin Prison on the 31st of January, 1870. How long Dick had been breaking the law, whether or not he had a jail record, why he took to violence in a time when it was relatively easy for a young and strong man to make his way by legitimate means—these details are shrouded in mystery. We know only the charge against him, and that he was entered on the prison register as a native of Kentucky, twenty-four years of age. There is a legend that he was a graduate of Harvard, but no evidence has ever been offered in support of the story. Mr. J. B. Hume of the Wells, Fargo detective service, who knew Dick as well as anyone, says nothing about this in his long and circumstantial account of Dick's life. However, there is ground for belief that he had at least some education. Almost as soon as he got to San Quentin he was given a job in the library and became known for his long and wordy lectures to the convicts, who listened to him when they had nothing better to do.

His prison activities did not stop there. His next move was to organize a Sunday-school Bible class among the men. From his point of vantage as leader of this class he conducted the lesson each week with what an observer of the time described as "a vigor and eloquence that struck terror to the souls of the minions of Satan." Oblivious to the paradox, this same reporter notes that "it was not long before Fellows was looked upon as the proper leader of the entire religious element of the prison." In fact, his sanctity was so pronounced that even the frankly ungodly among prisoners and guards refrained from swearing in his presence. Before long, Dick

Fellows was pointed out to visitors as one who had seen the error of his ways and come up out of great tribulation; an example of what a man can do when he makes up his mind to it. It was only a matter of two or three years until the prison officials, convinced that Dick's change of heart was genuine, were suggesting that he be released. Some of them, apparently, carried weight at Sacramento. For on April 4, 1874, with less than half his sentence served, Dick found that Governor Newton Booth had granted him an unconditional pardon and restored him to citizenship. He shook hands with everyone, conducted an impromptu prayer-service over those convicts whose hearts were still so hardened that they had the temerity to hint at his possible lack of good faith, and walked out of San Quentin a free man. His reformation may or may not have been sincere. At least for a year and a half he kept out of the way of the law.

In 1875 the Southern Pacific Railway was busy digging and blasting its right of way through the rugged Tehachapi Mountains that divide the broad, hot valleys of northern California from the fertile orange groves of the south. Trains chuffed down from San Francisco as far as the little town of Caliente, at the foot of the range. Thence passengers and goods were transferred to stages for the twenty-three-hour ride over the hills to Los Angeles.

Like all rail-head towns, particularly during construction, Caliente was tough. Police, sheriffs of the various counties, even Wells, Fargo detectives had a habit of taking a look at Caliente now and then, just to see if any of the unsavory characters on their books had come temporarily to anchor there. Mr. Hume of Wells, Fargo may or may not have been surprised when it was reported to him by one of his agents that Dick Fellows had been seen in town. Hume had been long enough at his business to be skeptical of reformations. The chances are he merely made a notation that the psalm-singer of San Quentin had turned up once more. Perhaps he issued instructions to his men in Caliente that they would do well to keep an eye on Dick. Because, as Hume knew, there was something big in the wind that November. Wells, Fargo was getting ready to send an unusually heavy shipment of gold by train to the end of the line, and then by stage over the rough trail through the Tehachapis to Los Angeles. That city, shocked by the suspension of the private bank of Temple & Workman, had been informed that cessation of specie payments was only temporary. On December 6, the citizens were promised, cash would again be available at the bank's windows. It was this cash that Wells, Fargo was plan-

ning to send over the dangerous road from Caliente south, a matter of some $240,000 in good gold coin.

On the morning of December 3, Hume was already in Caliente waiting for word from his superiors in the home office. That afternoon the message came. A wire from Mr. S. D. Brastow, Division Superintendent for Wells, Fargo, ordered him to meet the train on the morning of the 4th. Stages left regularly at eight o'clock in the morning, and the train got in approximately at seven. There would be ample time for the transfer, and Hume was ready to see that nothing could happen to the gold. Nothing did. The train arrived punctually. With the shipment of gold were Mr. Brastow himself, and Jerome Meyers, Chief of Police of Stockton, who were making the trip straight through to Los Angeles. The three express boxes containing the treasure were carried to the stage and placed inside it, Mr. Brastow and Chief Meyers taking seats between the boxes and the other passengers. Mr. Hume, who had been told he was to accompany the shipment also, sat outside, on the box with the driver. All three of the officers wore pistols, though they did not display them, and Hume had beside him a case containing two double-barreled shotguns and two Winchester rifles. As far as he knew, no one in Caliente could have heard about the shipment; but it did not pay to take chances. Moreover, in the crowd that had gathered at the depot to meet the train, he had seen a man he recognized. He was quite certain that it was Dick Fellows. And when the transfer of the express boxes was taking place, Mr. Hume noticed that Dick and an ugly-looking companion had moved over toward the stage to watch what was going on. It might have been mere idle curiosity, to be sure. But again it might not. As the stage rolled out of town to begin the slow climb, eighteen miles to the summit, Mr. Hume opened up his little arsenal, laying one of the shotguns carefully across his knees, and the other close beside him. The rifles he left in the case within easy reach. Probably no one would think of trying to stop the stage; but if anyone did, Mr. Hume would be ready for him.

Back in Caliente, Dick Fellows and his friend talked things over. They had heard no rumors of any shipment of gold, nor had anyone else. But it was not difficult to guess that three express boxes, each heavy enough so that two men struggled under its weight, did not contain waste paper. They knew nothing of Mr. Brastow and Chief Meyers; as far as they were concerned, the men were two passengers. But Dick, at least, knew Hume. And the combination of three weighty express boxes inside a stage and Mr. Hume on top of it was something to make the most stupid ex-convict think twice.

Dick thought to sufficiently good account so that he felt his ideas worth communicating to his friend. Together they hatched a plan, and the first of Dick's horses made its entrance into his career.

Whether this was Dick's initial departure from righteousness since he had left San Quentin is an open question. At any rate, he seems to have made a careful distinction between the various grades of theft. Neither he nor his companion had any idea what was in the express boxes, but it was quite certainly treasure, and in quantity. Dick was ready to commit the crime of highway robbery to get his hands on some of it. Yet he was not prepared to preface this major offense by a lesser one. His ugly companion had a horse. Very well; Dick would get one too. But he would not come down to horse-stealing, at least not too obviously. He would rent a horse; that was the way to do it. He knew of a livery-stable close by, and he would pick out a likely animal, hire it for the morning and meet his companion at a spot agreed upon, a bend in the road about a mile out of town. From there the two would ride across country, cutting ahead of the stage to intercept it in the hills. After they had robbed the stage—well, that was different. Naturally, Dick felt, he could hardly be expected to return the hired horse when it was plain that he needed the beast to make his escape. It was a fine point, perhaps, but it must have satisfied Dick. Arrangements were made that way, his fellow-highwayman-to-be rode out along the stage road, and Dick turned his steps toward the livery-stable, an innocent citizen bent on recreation and exercise.

There is unfortunately no record of the kind of horse the livery-stable keeper rented Dick. Later events made it clear that it need not have been a "bronco or mustang," as one newspaper reported. The mildest, most gentle cob could have been Dick's undoing. Indeed, the chances are that this beast was tame enough, for Dick rode him out of town without undue trouble. But gradually the animal, whatever its temper, must have come to know that the man on its back did not understand horses. Long before they were within sight of the rendezvous, it decided that it had had enough. Half an hour later, the owner of the stable was surprised to see his horse trot into the corral, its saddle empty. As for Dick, he had been unfortunate enough to light on his head in the road. It was some time before he regained consciousness and made his way back to town. He had enough money to pay the stableman; that was not what bothered him. What hurt was that he had failed to make good his promise. His companion would not dare to attack the stage alone. For that matter, he might not venture to come back to town, at least for some time. He would naturally suppose that Dick had

been arrested, that somehow the law had got wind of their scheme, and he would be sure to keep out of sight. Dick was sensitive; he did not like to think of the ridicule that would descend upon him when the truth came out. And he would have to tell the story or else be thought a coward whose nerve had failed at the last moment. It was not a pleasant prospect. Dick's head hurt, too, as he spent the afternoon brooding on his ill luck.

Then he had an idea. The northbound stage was due in from Los Angeles between eight and nine o'clock that evening. He had no notion what might be in the Wells, Fargo box, but certainly there would be something. No one could call him a coward if he held up that stage alone. As the thought occurred to him he noticed a saddle-horse hitched in front of Sisson & Wallace's store. Perhaps he was still a little dizzy from the accident earlier in the day; maybe he simply felt that his trouble that morning had come from his ignorant selection of a particularly spirited mount. Other men swung carelessly into the saddle and just rode away. Why couldn't he? Acting on the thought, he unhitched the animal and started up the road. He would redeem himself or know the reason why.

This time things went better, at least at first. Dick had timed himself well. About a mile and a half out of town he saw the stage coming, drew his pistol and posted himself by the side of the road. When he urged the horse forward, presented his weapon and commanded Dugan the driver to stop, he was obeyed. When he ordered Dugan harshly to throw out the box, Dugan threw it out. It was all very gratifying. Dick flourished his pistol in the direction of Caliente and suggested that the stage be on its way. The driver lowered his hands, picked up the reins, cracked his whip and rattled down the road in a cloud of dust. It was all over so soon that it seemed like nothing. That was the way to conduct the business. Dick must have wished that his companion had been there to see how well he handled it. He dismounted to see what the treasure-box held.

For a few minutes luck had been with Dick. Now it left him again. In his impulsive dash out of town on a stolen horse, he had forgotten that a Wells, Fargo box took a bit of opening. Neither a pistol nor a clasp-knife was of much help; the proper bandit—Dick had read about it often in the papers—always equipped himself with at least an old axe to do that part of the job. Moreover, even if he had been able to break the chest, he had brought along no sack for the booty. He must not stand here thinking about it, either. The stage would be in town any minute now, and officers would be riding out to find the man who had held it up. The thing

to do was to take the box along and break it open somewhere off the road, up some hidden canyon in the hills. Perhaps he could balance it in front of the saddle somehow. He picked it up awkwardly and turned toward the horse.

It is not to be supposed that Dick's borrowed mount had any especial grudge against Wells, Fargo or its boxes. That would be taking too much for granted. But the most mild-mannered horse could hardly observe with equanimity the heavy square-cornered object that its rider was carrying in the direction of its back. When that strange, bulky object was in the hands of a stranger who had already demonstrated that his style of riding was, to say the least, not what a decent animal was accustomed to, even a quiet and tractable horse might become alarmed. Dick's stolen steed was sufficiently upset to turn and head for home on a dead run. Once more Dick was left afoot, this time with the worst kind of incriminating evidence in his possession.

Something had to be done about it, and quickly.

A short distance from the road the contractors for the Southern Pacific had begun a long series of tunnels and new grading to carry the railway through the mountains. Dick shouldered the chest and started off in the darkness toward what should be the workings. Until morning he could hide in the confusion of earth and rock, perhaps find a tunnel into which he could crawl far enough to be out of sight. He was meditating upon his best move next morning when he walked straight off an eighteen-foot drop into the approach to Tunnel Five. His left leg was broken above the ankle, and the instep of the same foot was crushed by the falling box.

That would have been the end for most men. But Dick was of proper stuff, even if he could not get it through his head that he did not understand horses. After he had recovered a bit from the shock, he made certain that the rest of his limbs were in order, rolled over on to his hands and knees and began to push the chest ahead of him. The important thing was to get out of sight somewhere before daylight came and he was found there by the workmen. It took several painful hours, but by the time the lights began to twinkle on in the tents of the Chinese laborers scattered up the hill, Dick had made his way to the thicket of brush that bordered Tehachapi Creek. As he crawled, he had passed close enough to one tent to snatch an axe, and with this he broke open the box. There was no big treasure inside it; merely some $1,800, though that was better than nothing. Dick scratched up some earth with the axe, buried the broken chest as well as he could, covered the place with leaves and twigs, and crawled into another part of the

brush, where he spent the day. In the evening he cut a pair of willow-forks for crutches, took a few dollars and hopped over to a Chinese tent, where he bought some food. So far, by great good fortune, no one had found his hiding-place. But sooner or later someone would stumble on it. He must get farther away, out of that part of the country entirely. Fortified by the food, he turned down the creek toward a farm he had seen about a mile away, owned by a Mr. Fountain. His leg and foot were paining him greatly, but anything was better than going back to San Quentin. The reader will find it hard to credit what was in Dick's mind, but the stubborn fact remains to testify to his purpose. What Dick wanted on Mr. Fountain's farm was no more and no less than a horse.

Mr. Hume had been pleased to reach Los Angeles safely with the quarter of a million dollars for the relief of the suspended bank and its depositors. But he had little time for self-congratulation. Waiting for him was a telegram with the bad news that the up-stage had been robbed scarcely twelve hours after he and his precious freight had passed. Chasing robbers was his job, and he took the next stage north. With him went Meyers, who had to go back to Stockton anyway, and who didn't mind helping Wells, Fargo's man run a bandit down. After all, there was always the reward, and even a Chief of Police is human enough to take account of an extra dollar or two legitimately earned.

In Caliente, Hume and Meyers rented horses at the livery-stable and proceeded to the scene of the robbery, where they cast about to find some clue. Dugan, the stage-driver, had no idea who the robber might be, nor had he been able to describe him very clearly. He was a man on a horse and he had a pistol. More than that he couldn't be sure about. Hume and Meyers went on searching; as police officers they both knew that clues were the result of careful, plodding hard work. Something might turn up. They would comb the ground on both sides of the highway and see what came of it.

It was on one of their slow circlings that they encountered Mr. Fountain's son, Tommy. The boy was doing a little circling of his own, his eyes fixed on the ground, his head swinging anxiously from left to right and back again as he rode.

Mr. Hume asked him what he had lost. Perhaps, he suggested, the boy was also trying to pick up the robber's trail in the hope of some of the reward. No, Tommy said, that wasn't it. The night before someone had stolen a horse from his father's barn, and he was trying to find it. Luckily the thief had chosen, out of three horses in the stable, the very one that could be easily traced. Mr.

Hume wanted to know how that was, and Tommy explained. Only a few days earlier the missing animal had cast a shoe, and his father had tacked on a mule-shoe to protect the hoof until he could take him to the blacksmith. On this soft ground it would be easy enough to follow a trail marked by three horseshoes and one mule-shoe. The officers agreed that this would be simple. All a man needed to do would be to cross the trail once. They told Tommy that if they encountered any such tracks they would send word to him. As an afterthought, Hume told the boy to let them know, too, in case he came across the trail. There was no reason to connect a stage-robber and a stolen horse, especially since the driver had reported the bandit as a mounted man. Still, you never knew. A horse-thief might be a robber too, and Hume didn't mind picking up some minor criminal while he was at it.

As it turned out, it was just this persistent interest in his job that led Hume to the very man he was looking for. Because young Tommy Fountain was a conscientious boy, and he kept at it until he was rewarded by striking the unmistakable track of a horse with one mule-shoe. He sent word to Mr. Hume and then rode into Bakersfield and got hold of the sheriff, who went out with him to track the thief down. By the time Hume and Meyers got to Bakersfield, Tommy and the sheriff had returned, with them a bearded figure supported on rough crutches, dragging a foot and leg so badly swollen that the jail doctor had a great deal of trouble cutting the boot away. Hume recognized him immediately as his old friend, Dick Fellows. He admitted stealing the horse but stoutly denied that he had any connection whatever with the robbery of the Los Angeles stage. Why, then, asked Mr. Hume, had the sheriff found on him the sum of $1,294? A man with that much money didn't need to steal horses. Dick stubbornly shook his head. His money was no concern of theirs. He had nothing to do with any stage-robbery. He would say no more.

Next morning, Hume and Meyers moved in with Dick and talked to him. If the sheriff had found only $1,294, there must be another $500 hidden somewhere. What had Dick done with that? Dick had done nothing with it, he said. How could he have hidden money that he had never seen? If this money about which Mr. Hume was talking so much had come from the Los Angeles stage, it was nothing that he, Dick, had anything to do with. He stuck to his story and after a while Hume and Meyers gave up their grilling. As Hume left the room, however, Dick made one significant remark. "Mr. Hume," he said, "things are not going just right for me. If I should send for you, will you come back from San Fran-

cisco?" Mr. Hume did not let the prisoner see that he was pleased with this turn of affairs. He replied merely that if Dick meant business he would be glad to come back and talk to him at any time. Dick was left to think that over while Hume caught the 11 o'clock evening train north.

Something had certainly gone very wrong, and Dick was pretty sure he knew what it was. After one day of thinking it over, he wrote Hume a note. The Wells, Fargo officer was waiting for it; he had smelled a rat too. The next train brought him back to Bakersfield. What, he wanted to know, did Dick have to say? This time Dick came out frankly with his story. Yes, he had robbed the stage. He had broken his leg trying to escape after his horse had left him, and he had made his way to Mr. Fountain's farm and stolen another horse, the one on which he was found. Those were the facts, and he was sure Mr. Hume had guessed most of them already.

But this was not what was on his mind. What had made him angry was something else. On the way back to town with the Bakersfield sheriff. Dick had made a bargain. The understanding was that the sheriff was to aid Dick to escape, in return for which he was to keep a share of the Wells, Fargo money. Instead, he had turned in some of the cash to Mr. Hume, kept out $500 for himself, and then refused to let Dick escape after all. This kind of treatment was more than Dick could stand. What he wanted now was revenge on the sheriff who had double-crossed him.

Mr. Hume was glad to oblige. The sheriff was called in and charged, in Dick's presence. He tried denials at first, but Mr. Hume persisted and at length the officer said that perhaps the money might have dropped from his pocket while he was bringing Dick in. He would go out and look over the ground, he said. He came in later with $200 which he said he had discovered on the trail, but he could not account for the rest. Mr. Hume saw to it that he was dismissed from the office of sheriff; Dick had that much satisfaction.

As for himself, he was indicted for highway robbery and put to bed until his leg could heal. Six months later he was found guilty, made a touching plea for mercy which did not sensibly affect the court, and was sentenced to eight years in State's Prison. It appeared that Dick, with his hymns and his horses, had at last come up against a stone wall.

Yet even this second phase of his criminal career was not quite over. Bakersfield had only recently been made the seat of Kern County, and until the new jail was built prisoners were housed in

a plank building. After being sentenced, Dick was alone in this improvised prison, waiting to be transported to San Quentin. There was a guard on duty; Jailer Reed watched outside the building all night. But in the morning when he opened the door to take Dick his breakfast, he found the room empty. In one corner of the floor was a gaping hole through which Dick had fled, taking with him the fine new pair of crutches with which the county had supplied him.

It is not the fact of his recapture within four days that will startle the reader, but Dick's own story of what he had done while he was at large. For once again he had obstinately turned to his oldest and weakest trick to save himself. After two days and nights spent hiding in the swamps of Kern River, Dick had made his way to a ranch and once more stolen a horse. This time the animal was not saddled, and Dick had led it to another farmhouse, where he had hitched it to a post in the small corral while he went into the barn to find a saddle. He must have been a strange-looking figure as he came out of the barn, crutches under his arms, the ungainly saddle flopping in front of him—so strange, indeed, that the horse reared in a panic, broke the head-rope with which Dick had tied him and galloped for home.

Dick must have known then that he was done for. But he had spunk enough to take back the saddle and hide in the barn until the farmer hitched up and went to town. Then he made himself as neat as possible, put on his best manner, knocked at the farmhouse door and turned the full force of his charm on the woman of the house. He was a traveler, he said, who had lost his way. Could the lady please direct him to Bakersfield? She could and did. Better, she suggested that he come in and have a bite to eat. Dick was only too glad. He ate heartily, made polite conversation, thanked his hostess and went on his way. Unfortunately for him, the husband came back that noon full of the story he had heard in town, a fantastic tale of a stage-robber who had escaped from the jail, actually on crutches. His wife confessed sadly that she had given that very robber breakfast. This time they both rode into Bakersfield. By noon two posses were out and Dick was back in jail before evening. Two jailers watched him that night; next day the new sheriff took him north. On June 16 the gate of San Quentin Prison shut behind Dick Fellows for the second time.

II

THE BIBLE-CLASS TRICK might work once, but there was no use trying it again.

Dick contented himself with watching his behavior, breaking no rules, working hard at all the tasks set him. It was not long before they gave him back his old job in the prison library. There he had time to indulge his taste for reading and for writing letters. One specimen of his correspondence has been preserved, a long epistle in which he apologized to Mr. Hume of Wells, Fargo for taking so much of his time, deplored the folly of his escape from Bakersfield jail since it had accomplished nothing excepting to waste the county's money, and expressed his opinion of the crooked sheriff who had taken his bribe and then turned him over to the law.

He spoke his mind, too, about those who had finally captured him; a crowd of nincompoops he called them. "They even had the bad taste," he wrote, "to divert from their legitimate calling a group of sheepherders in order to add to the distress of an unfortunate fellow-being who was only endeavoring to flee the country. As they crowded around, each discussing his relative importance in effecting my capture, I could not help thinking (save the profane comparison) that unless shepherds had woefully degenerated since Oriental times, the infant Jesus himself would have met short shrift at their hands, if Herod had had the foresight to offer a suitable reward!"

Also he was anxious to reassure Hume regarding his activities when he should have served his sentence. "I do not think," he wrote, "that your Company should be too hard on me. I have never directed against them particularly any matured scheme for plunder, or in fact against anyone, and indeed I have had no definite idea in regard to the matter, unless it was that I should try to live honestly within the pale of society, and if at any time compelled to trespass to supply my immediate wants, I would aim at affluent corporations and never molest poor persons or private individuals. I do not say this complainingly, but merely for the sake of a better understanding, and think my whole record will attest to the truth of it."

It is hard to say whether Dick thought this disingenuous plea would move Mr. Hume to do something toward getting him out of prison, or whether he was just talking for the sake of making conversation. Nevertheless it is interesting to note the old, familiar rationalization. Dick would never rob the poor; not a bit of it. Good old Robin-Hood-Perkins-Lytle-Fellows was only after the "affluent corporations." If only Mr. Hume would realize this, perhaps it would lead to a "better understanding." How Hume was expected to improve his understanding when he already knew quite well that

Dick robbed big corporations, Wells, Fargo included, is something that Dick himself could hardly have explained.

In any event, it was with such letter-writing and his routine prison tasks that Dick occupied himself for the five years he spent in San Quentin. There being no black marks against him in prison, his term was up in May, 1881. Again Dick left State's Prison, presumably to "try to live honestly within the pale of society," as he had assured Mr. Hume he intended to do.

His endeavor lasted exactly two months, during which he got a job as a solicitor on the *Daily Echo* in Santa Cruz, taking part of his pay in advertising in which he announced that he was a teacher of Spanish and would be glad to have pupils. No one in Santa Cruz wanted to learn any more Spanish than he already knew, and Dick gave it up. On July 19 he held up the stage from San Luis Obispo to Soledad. He got only $10 for his pains, but he was back in the business.

All that summer and autumn stages were robbed with alarming frequency. Dick ranged far and wide, once traveling north all the way to the Russian River to hold up a stage near Duncan's Mills. He never bothered to go that far afield again, for in the box when he broke it open there was no money, no gold-dust, no treasure of any sort, only one document which proved on examination to be a letter written in Chinese.

But his depredations between San Luis Obispo and the Santa Clara Valley became more and more bold. Stages were held up sometimes no more than a week apart. No one was quite sure who the robber was, but Mr. Hume was beginning to think it might be Dick, and sent one of his special officers, Captain Charles Aull, who was later an official at San Quentin, to see if he could not bring the daring highwayman to justice. Something had to be done if Wells, Fargo & Company were to continue doing business with the confidence of the public.

Captain Aull believed with Mr. Hume that the way to catch a criminal was by slow and patient staff-work. First he drew a map of the towns and villages in the valley north of Soledad. Then, armed with descriptive circulars, he proceeded to cover them all, one after another, interesting local officers and as many citizens as possible, leaving copies of his leaflet wherever he went. Sooner or later he would cross Dick's trail, he felt sure. In the meantime he was making it impossible for the bandit to hide in any of the towns through which he passed.

The first place in which Captain Aull found any hint of Dick was in Santa Cruz, to which he had returned, and where he had

again attempted to find some pupils in Spanish. This was the occasion on which he christened himself "G. Brett Lytle," and perhaps it did indicate an honest desire to lead a respectable life. Nevertheless if this was the case, Dick had been a bit too late in making up his mind. There were now a dozen or more robberies for which he was wanted, and neither Mr. Hume nor Captain Aull was the kind of man to let down, once a pursuit had definitely been started.

Dick himself must have come to the same conclusion, for he did not stay long in Santa Cruz. One morning he got up early, paid his bill, gave his landlord a carpetbag with instructions to ship it to Soledad, where he would call for it, and left town on foot, going up the coast, as was later reported, toward Pescadero. The landlord had no notion who his guest might be, and took the satchel down to the Wells, Fargo office to ship it as he had been told. There Dick Thompson, the agent, remembered Captain Aull's visit and the instructions to be curious about strangers. He asked the hotelkeeper about his guest, and decided that the stranger must be the man Aull was looking for. He wired the officer, and one more mesh of the net was closed to Dick.

After that, the denouement came quickly. It was plain that Dick was heading northward, making for San Francisco, where he might conceal himself far better than in the countryside. Captain Aull redoubled his efforts and with Hume's permission set more men to work distributing circulars and questioning local officers and hotel men. Within a week the trap closed. Dick was caught between two groups of searchers and tried to hide on a ranch near Mayfield. The foreman, who was on the lookout, saw him slip into a barn, called two of his men and made Dick prisoner. If Constable Burke of Santa Clara had not been quite so vain, Dick's career would have been over there and then.

Burke was a good, hard-working officer as far as his talents went. He was capable enough so long as he had someone to give him orders, and there was never any question of his honesty. But under his own power he was not so reliable. His trouble was that he did not know his own weakness, which was an exceptional appetite for flattery. And Dick lost no time in taking advantage of this. When Burke searched him and found on him a watch that had been stolen from a stage-driver only the month before, Dick said he was willing to give up and confess. No one else, he explained, could have made him tell the facts; but Burke's brilliant discovery had showed him how hopeless it was to try to deceive him. Now he was willing to admit all the robberies. He gave Burke a list of his crimes and talked to him at length about the fabulous sums of money he had

hidden, and the rewards to which Burke would be entitled, now that he knew where to find them. When they got off the evening train in San José, Dick explained to the gaping crowd that no one but Constable Burke could have run him down, adding that he had the greatest respect for Burke's abilities, and that he was the kind of man who would go far, perhaps even as a detective for Wells, Fargo up in San Francisco. When they finally left the depot, Burke could hardly refuse Dick's request that he join him in a parting drink at the IXL Saloon before turning him over to the officers who were waiting at the jail.

Burke should have known better. The fact remains that he did not. Dick's careful flattery had numbed what judgment he had, which was little enough. In the IXL Saloon, they had two drinks, Burke whispering to the bartender that his handcuffed companion was Dick Fellows, the famous stage-robber, and that he had captured him single-handed. That was the stupid Burke's last chance to boast. For as they left the bar and stepped out into the street, Dick raised his manacled wrists and brought them down hard on the back of Burke's neck. The constable measured his length on the sidewalk, and Dick was gone. Burke fired one hopeless shot into the dark and then turned unhappily toward where Captain Aull and his fellow-officers were waiting impatiently at the jail for him to bring in his prisoner.

There was nothing for it but to begin again. Now, however, there was no need to proceed quietly. Dick knew they were on his trail; the more generally his latest escape was known, the better. The officers routed out a printer and put him to work. Before morning they had distributed two thousand new circulars offering $600 reward for Dick's delivery at the jail. It was only a question of time.

A few miles out of San José, not far from Santa Clara College, a certain Dr. Gunckel lived quietly on his little ranch, seeing such patients as came to him, caring for his few head of stock, tending his small vegetable garden. Early in the evening of the sixth day after Dick had fooled Constable Burke so badly, Dr. Gunckel went out to his barn to roll down a bale of hay. He was quite surprised, when he pulled it away from the others, to find a tramp sitting coolly behind it. He was still more astonished to note that on the floor beside the stranger was the remainder of a good meal, including some canned fruit that he recognized as coming from his own cellar and a half-bottle of what was most certainly his own special imported London Stout.

The tramp was Dick, of course. But Dick could talk fast, and

this was only a mild, unworldly little country doctor. Before he knew it, Dr. Gunckel found himself sympathizing with the unfortunate man who had allowed himself to drink too much and had been so harshly stoned by a group of small boys that he had had to take refuge in the Doctor's barn. He even gave the poor fellow an old hat he happened to have about the place and helped him brush up and tidy himself. He was beginning to offer a gentle word or two of counsel on the dangers of intemperance, when the tramp unceremoniously took his leave. Only then did Dr. Gunckel remember the hue and cry about an escaped stage-robber. He gave the alarm, but it was too late. Dick had vanished, apparently into thin air.

But with the countryside aroused as it was by this new report, no one could have hoped to remain hidden for long. Next day word came to the officers that a man answering Dick's description had been seen in the hills near Los Gatos. Chief Dan Haskell of San José and one of his officers named Juan Edson set out in pursuit. At the Mountain Dale House in that village they learned that their man had stopped for a short time and read a copy of the San José *Mercury* in which was printed a long story of the escape of Dick Fellows, together with a detailed description of the robber. He had put down the paper, the innkeeper said, and walked out of the hotel and up the road.

All afternoon, Haskel and Edson tramped the vicinity, asking questions. And early in the evening their patience had its inevitable result. Up a narrow lane that led into one of the hundreds of little canyons of the Coast Range hills, they saw a lighted cabin window and went to investigate. As a precautionary measure, they looked in at the window before knocking. At a table in the center of the room sat Dick, waiting for his innocent host to bring him his supper. The officers did not knock. While Edson covered Dick through the window, Chief Haskell walked in and snapped the handcuffs on Dick's wrists. They took him to the San José jail, but this time they gave him no chance to play any tricks. While they waited for Mr. Hume to come down from San Francisco, three shifts of wakeful guards watched Dick every minute. So did some seven hundred citizens of San José, who were curious to see the noted bandit whose deeds had had the town in an uproar for weeks. The *Mercury* reporter wrote that he "seemed not at all displeased at this evidence of his notoriety." However he felt about it, he treated everyone with courtesy, discussing his case with all who chose to speak to him about it and conducting himself, as even his guards admitted, altogether in the manner of a gentleman.

Nor did Mr. Hume take any risks with his slippery prisoner. The sheriff of Santa Barbara was on his way north to receive Dick, who was to be tried in that county for a robbery committed there. Since he was coming that far, Mr. Hume reasoned, he might as well come on up to San Francisco, in whose sturdy jail Dick would be far safer. The journey was not tiresome. Dick entertained Mr. Hume all the way with a detailed narrative of his crimes. Now that he was caught, confessing, he said, gave him actual pleasure. When the sheriff of Santa Barbara arrived, he found Dick safe and sound. In his custody, Dick made the trip to Santa Barbara no less safely. There he was tried, found guilty on all counts and sentenced to Folsom Prison for the term of his natural life.

By all rules the story of Dick Perkins, *alias* Lytle, *alias* Fellows, should end here. And if the Santa Barbara officials had realized just how resourceful a man they had in their jail, it would have been the end. But they failed to appreciate Dick. Perhaps they were not to blame; after all, it was the northern counties that knew him, northern officers and citizens who had learned to their cost how quickly Dick could think and act. Constable Burke could have told them a few things; so could Mr. Hume, or Bakersfield's bribe-taking and double-crossing sheriff, or Mr. Fountain's boy Tommy, or Dr. Gunckel. Nobody warned them. Wherefore Dick had one more chance to get together with a horse.

On April 2, 1882, when they were almost ready to take him up to Folsom Prison, Dick struck down his jailer, leaping to his shoulders from a shelf in his cell and bearing him to the floor. "It is life or death for me," Dick was reported as saying to the guard, "and I am going to get your revolver." He got it and fled. Two blocks from the jail there was a horse staked out to graze. There was neither saddle nor bridle, but this was no time to be choosy. Dick pulled up the stake, looped the long rope into a kind of coil, scrambled on to the bony back and dug his heels into the animal's ribs. For the last time he was trusting himself to a horse.

Neither Dick nor anyone else could have known it, of course, but the horse had been staked where it was for a very good reason. Its owner had almost lost the beast through its mistaken nibbling of loco-weed the week before. It had made a partial recovery, but some of its narcotic nightmares must have lingered. Because Dick had covered scarcely a hundred yards before his mount suddenly went into a fit. Dick had no chance at all. Even his arms flung round the horse's neck only saved him for half a minute. Early risers in Santa Barbara that morning were treated to the spectacle of the

famous stage-robber ignominiously rolled in the dust of the public square. Pistol or no pistol, it was no trouble to catch him after that.

Dick had time to write one letter before they took him under heavy guard to Folsom. He addressed it to the editor of the Santa Barbara *Press*, and in it he made it plain that he had come to certain conclusions about the profession of highwayman. "Dear Sir," he wrote, "I have just noticed your article in reference to my recent attempt at escape and also your editorial in regard to my past career entitled 'It Don't Pay.' After thanking you for your kindly notices, I have to say that both are in the main correct, and I most heartily concur in what you have to say in the last named. I would add only that the same may be said of any unlawful calling. My unfortunate experience has thrown me into the society of thousands of law-breakers in all walks of life, and in every instance the result is the same sad story. 'It Don't Pay,' in any sense. I learn that the boat will leave here in a few minutes, and I bid you and the people of Santa Barbara good-bye.

DICK FELLOWS"

It will be noted that Dick did not mention horses. No one could call it anything but the merest coincidence that one sentence of his polite note reads, "My unfortunate experience has thrown me. . . ." But from the tone of his letter it is quite clear that he had already begun to lay plans for the manner in which he would serve his sentence. Only the hardest-hearted reader can deny at least a momentary glow of pleasure at learning that within the year Dick Fellows was made a teacher in the Department of Moral Instruction at Folsom Prison.

James B. Hendryx

The Man with the Glass Eye

I

OLD CUSH, proprietor of Cushing's Fort, the combined trading post and saloon that served the little community of outlawed men that had grown up on Halfaday Crick close against the Yukon-Alaska border, set a bottle and two glasses onto the bar as Black John Smith crossed the floor and elevated a foot to the battered brass rail. Black John's glance centered on the well-worn leather dice box that remained on the back bar beside a row of glasses and a folded copy of the *Police Gazette*.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Break yer arm? Or did someone steal the dice?"

"This un's on me," Cush announced. "This here's my birthday, accordin' to the calendar—September the fifteenth."

"Cripes—I never knew you had a birthday!"

"Hell, everyone's got a birthday! They'd have to."

"Guess that's right, when you come right down to studyin' it out," Black John admitted. "How'd the old world look a hundred years ago today?"

"What d'you mean—a hundred years? I ain't so damn old as you might think."

"Mebbe not. I was only goin' by appearances—that, an' the fact that you've lived through more wives than most men deems it expedient to marry."

"Huh—most of them wives wasn't only what you might say, temporary. They wasn't none of 'em worth a damn—except the fourth one—an' she up an' died on me. You can figger what they was like. You seen Annie. An' the first two wasn't much better. I'm shore grateful to you, John, fer helpin' me git shet of her. It jest goes to show a man might better stop an' think before he goes ahead an' marries someone."

The big man grinned. "You ought to know."

"Yeah—an' I learnt it the hard way. At that, I've be'n lucky. By Cripes—look at what might of happened to me—what with

Elsie sleepin' with a loaded gun in under her piller on account she claimed she was afraid of burglars, an' Maud, with that long slim knife strapped to her leg, an' Annie an' her damn flypaper soakin' in under the bed—by God, I break out in a cold sweat, even thinkin' about it!"

"Yeah, but you've got to remember, Cush—they wasn't none of them women fell heir to no onmittigated blessin' when they got you. There's things you've let drop durin' the course of our acquaintance that leads me to believe you wasn't no model husband—like keepin' women here an' there in flats—an' holdin' out on yer wives when you make a killin' at the races, er gamblin', and goin' on sprees like you claim you used to every now an' then—an'——"

"But hell, John—they didn't know nothin' about the women an' the money I helt out on 'em! The way I look at it, it wasn't none of their business. As fer the binges—hell, a lot of men goes on binges."

"Yer conduct was far from exemplary, an' absolutely incompatible with conjugal bliss."

"I'm doubtin' that them big words means a damn thing, now you've got 'em said. What I'm gittin' at—every damn one of them first three wives figgered on knockin' me off when the right time come. An' what I claim, it's a hell of a note when a man ain't safe either eatin' er sleepin' in his own house. It wasn't no square deal, 'cause I never figgered on knockin' them off. But believe me, when I seen Annie comin' in that door the other day I wished fer a minute I had! All I want is a square deal—an' when you look back at it, I ain't had none."

"I'm afraid," grinned Black John, "that yer ethics is sadly warped."

"You an' yer damn ethics yer allus talkin' about! I've told you a hundred times I never had none—an' on top of that I wouldn't even know one if I seen it! Drink up, an' have another. A man had ort to celebrate his birthday. Cripes, I'm lucky to be havin' one. If any one of them women would of found out what was goin' on, I wouldn't be here. The way I figgered it, what they didn't know didn't hurt 'em none."

"A comfortin' philosophy—but one that discloses no deep-seated sense of rectitude. Ondoubtless yer forebears was ignoble."

"What four bears? I never had no bears. Back when I was a kid some of the saloons in town used to have a bear chained out back fer to sort of draw trade. But they stunk, an' draw'd more flies than trade. An' when they grow'd up they'd git mean, what with folks teasin' 'em. An' if some drunk would of got bit er clawed, he

could sue fer damages. Cripes, in Cincinnati one saloon keeper got sued because his cat bit a drunk, an' it cost him five thousan' dollars. If that cat would of be'n a bear, look what he'd had to pay!"

"It's a lovely day," Black John grinned. "An' what a wonderful language we've got."

"It would be all right if you didn't keep on clutterin' it all up with big words so anyone don't know what yer talkin' about. Drink up. Here comes someone—an' he ain't no one I ever seen before."

Black John glanced through the open doorway to see a man approaching across the little clearing from the direction of the creek. He was a tall, well-proportioned man, and he carried a rifle slung across his shoulder. The man paused in the doorway and subjected the room to a searching glance. Then he advanced to the bar, as Cush slid a glass toward him.

"Ah, a saloon, eh? It isn't often a man finds all the comforts of home while he's off on a prospecting trip."

"Drink up," Cush invited, shoving the bottle across the bar. "This un's on the house."

The man took his place to the left of Black John, and stood his rifle in the corner formed by the bar and the storeroom wall. When the drinks were poured he raised his glass. "Here's lookin' at you," he said, and downed his drink at a swallow. Reaching into his pocket, he withdrew a wallet, and laid a ten-dollar bill on the bar. "Have one on me," he invited.

"Stranger in these parts?" Black John asked casually, as the glasses were filled.

The man turned and faced him. "Yes," he answered. "Doing a little prospecting. I was shoving up the crick and saw the little landing here, so I stopped in. Didn't expect to find a saloon. Thought it was some prospector's layout. I passed a cabin three or four miles down the creek, but it was deserted."

"That's Olson's old shack," Cush said.

"Claim peter out?"

"No."

"But the place seems abandoned."

"Yup."

"Fact is," Black John explained, "that claim's never be'n really worked. We hung Olson, an' several subsequent tenants has met up with misfortune of one kind or another. The place is held to be onlucky."

"Why did you hang Olson?"

"Oh, I disrec'lect. It was ondoubtless fer somethin' he done."

"Are there many locations on the crick?"

"Forty, fifty, mebbe—somewheres along there."

"Then there should be plenty of room for one more," the man smiled. "No objection to a man prospecting hereabouts, I presume."

"None whatever."

The man turned and pointed toward the door to the storeroom. "I see you run a trading post as well as a saloon," he said. "Mighty handy not to have to go clear down to the big river for supplies. I'll run through my outfit. There may be a few items I'll need. I suppose you could supply them?"

"Chances is."

"If that claim of Olson's has been abandoned, is there any objection to my moving in there—using it as a sort of base from which to carry on my prospecting?"

"None whatever," Black John replied. "But if all you want is a base camp, you don't have to go clean back to Olson's. You could move into One-Eyed John's cabin."

The man's eyes suddenly narrowed, and Black John wondered whether it was his imagination, or was there a flinty tone in the man's voice as he asked, "Who's One-Eyed John?"

"He ain't no one, now," Cush explained. "That's who he used to be 'fore we hung him."

"Hanging seems to be a popular pastime around here," the stranger remarked. "Might I ask why you hung him?"

"You might," Black John replied, "but as in the case of Olson, I couldn't name it, offhand. They were both hung after bein' convicted by a duly app'inted miner's meetin'. We resort to hangin', not as a pastime, but as a sort of hint to the livin', that sech acts as was perpetrated by the hangee is frowned on hereabouts. There's several items of misconduct that merits a hangin' on Halfaday Crick, amongst which I might mention, murder, claim jumpin', robbery er larceny in any form, an' general skullduggery. Hangin's is easily avoided on Halfaday—but they're easy come by, too. We don't keep no written records of the proceedin's of a miner's meetin', nor we ain't got no written code of morals. We jest sort of let a man's conscience be his guide."

"This cabin?" the man asked. "Where is it located?"

"Jest a short piece down. It sets a little ways back from the crick at the top of a high bank. It's right handy to the fort, here. If you'd like to move in, yer welcome. I'll give you a hand with yer stuff."

"I might as well, I guess. If I don't like it, I can always move on. And seeing we're going to be neighbors, as you might say, we may

as well get acquainted. My name's Collins—Pete Collins. Heard about this gold rush down in the States, and thought I'd try my hand at it. It's quite a trip, for a man that ain't used to the wild country."

"Never done any prospectin', eh?"

"No. But I can learn. From what I hear, a hell of a lot of others have."

The big man nodded. "That's right. An' now, Pete, I'll make you acquainted with Lyme Cushing, acrost the bar, there. He's known locally as Cush, an' I'm jest plain John Smith, better known as Black John on account of my whiskers bein' that color. An' now, if you'll fill up an' shove the bottle along, I'll buy a drink."

As the glasses were filled a man stepped into the room and advancing to the bar held up a string of fish. "Had pretty good luck, this mornin'," he announced. "Want to buy some?"

"Keep them damn slimy things off'n the bar!" Cush cried. "An' don't lay 'em on the floor, neither. It's hard enough to keep this saloon clean without havin' it all stunk up with fish. Take 'em around back an' give 'em to the klooch an' tell her I says to fry 'em up fer dinner."

When the man returned a few moments later Black John introduced him to the newcomer as One-Armed John.

Collins eyed the empty sleeve. "Are you a prospector?" he asked.

"Who, me? Hell, no! A man with his right arm gone can't handle no pick an' no shovel. I do odd jobs now an' then for the boys. But mostly I fish."

"Been here long? Here in the north country, I mean?"

"Shore I have. Come in on a whaler, ten, fifteen years ago, an' jumped her at St. Michaels. Be'n here an' there along the river ever sence."

"You know the country, then? Know it well enough to get around in it?"

Black John grinned. "If One-Arm don't know it, I wouldn't know who would. Not havin' no reg'lar occupation, he's always more or less on the go."

The man nodded, and turned to One-Armed John who was filling the glass Cush spun toward him. "How would you like a regular job?" he asked.

One-Arm paused, bottle in hand. "What kind of a job?" he asked.

"Well, I suppose you'd call it a guiding job. I came into the country to prospect for gold. I bought a prospecting outfit in Whitehorse, but I don't know much about using it. I don't know the country and I don't know a damn thing about hunting for gold,

except that they seem to find it along the cricks. And on top of that, I'm apt to get lost if I go poking around by myself. You know something about prospecting, I suppose?"

"Oh, shore. I prospected around Star City, an' on the Koyukuk, an' Birch Crick, an' Fortymile right up to when I got crippled."

"How'd you lose your arm?"

"Hell, I never lost it! Feller shot it off with a shotgun on account of me an' his wife. I figger it was practically a miss from where he stud. If he hadn't be'n so damn mad he'd of got me right through the middle. Shore, I'll guide fer you. An ounce a day—that's goin' wages. But I won't guarantee you'll make no strike."

"Okay," the man agreed. "Black John, here suggested that I move into One-Eyed John's cabin, wherever that is. So if you'll give me a hand with my stuff at the landing, we'll pack it over there. Then you'd better get your stuff together and move in there, too."

When the two had departed, Cush glanced across at Black John. "Well, I guess, for onct, an honest man come to Halfaday," he said.

The big man grinned. "Yeah? Well, personally, I don't never jump at conclusions."

"You mean you figger he's a crook?"

"I ain't figured one way or another. Far as I can see, he ain't betrayed no criminal tendency as yet. Nor neither I couldn't detect no outstandin' symptoms of rectitude."

"I s'pose them words means he might, er he mightn't, eh? But leastways he didn't start in claimin' his name was John Smith, an' he didn't shoot off his mouth about what he done, an' what he's goin' to do, an' he didn't claim he come here 'cause he heer'd how the police dasn't show up on the crick, an' he didn't brag how if one does, he'll blast him to hell, like most of the damn crooks does. An' he come right out an' says he don't know nothin' about the country, an' about prospectin', an' he never told us how he was some big-shot where he come from. Chances is, he never ever heer'd of Halfaday—jest kep' a-comin' on up the White till he got here, same as anyone would git to any crick."

"Could be." Black John admitted. "Time'll tell. Onfortunately for the honest man, the presumption is that there's two strikes on him, or he wouldn't be here. It'll be interestin' to see how things works out."

II

A MONTH PASSED, during which Collins made two week-long forays into the hills with One-Armed John. In the interims he fre-

quented the saloon fraternizing with the men of Halfaday. He drank moderately, played a good game of stud, and was accepted as one of them.

One afternoon One-Armed John sauntered into the saloon as Black John, Pot-Gutted John, and Cush were shaking dice for the drinks.

"What's the matter?" Black John asked. "Quit yer job?"

"Hell, no! Pete, he's fixin' to go off on another trip in a couple of days. He's a damn good feller to work fer, Pete is. He pays me straight time whether we're out on the cricks, er jest layin' around here. Told me I could go ahead an' fish, er do whatever I wanted, jest so I'll be around when he wants to make another trip."

"Run onto anythin' yet?" Cush asked.

"No, not nothin' to speak of. We run onto some colors on a crick that runs into Ladue five, six mile below Sebastian's Village. An' some more on another crick back off'n that there crick where Whiskey Bill located. But they wasn't nothin' to write home about. Pete, he goes at it kinda clumsy like—but he's gittin' onto the hang of it. Anyways, he ain't allus growlin' an' crabbin' about things not goin' right. An' he's a damn good shot, too. By cripes, he knocked over a yearlin' moose one mornin' clean acrost a beaver meadow a damn good five hundred yards if it was a foot! 'How's that?' he says. 'Pretty good shootin' eh?'

" 'It was a damn lucky shot, if you ask me,' I says. An' he kinda laughs. 'Lucky, hell!' he says. 'You ain't so bad with a rifle yerself,' he says, havin' saw me knock over a caribou calf the week before with a runnin' shot. 'Tell you what I'll do—I'll shoot three shots with you fer an ounce a shot, jest to show you there wasn't nothin' lucky about killin' that moose. Our rifles is jest alike, so there ain't no advantage there, one way er another. But you, havin' to shoot left-handed, an' without no right hand to stidy yer gun. I'll let you take a rest over a log er a rock to sort of even things up'." One-Armed John downed his drink and refilled his glass.

" 'Course, havin' to shoot left-handed wasn't no handicap, 'cause I was left-handed to start with. But I didn't see no call to tell him that. An' with him givin' me a rest, I figgered it would be a cinch to cop off them three ounces. So Pete, he steps off the distance, two hundred, four hundred, an' six hundred yards, in an old burnin', an' makes blazes with his ax on them burnt stubs that shows up good an' plain. 'You shoot first,' he says, 'an' then go on ahead an' stick a twig in yer bullet-holes, if any, so you kin tell 'em from mine.' Well, that's what I done, and when I went an' looked at 'em, I figgered he'd have to go some to beat me. I'd set my bullet

in every blaze, an' not so damn fer from the middle of all but the last one, which it was damn good shot to hit it at all.

"Then he tuk his three shots—an' when we went an' looked at 'em, damn if he wasn't inside of me on every blaze. Yes, sir, he win every damn one of them three ounces—an' I'm tellin' you that's shootin'! He's a damn good shot, an' he's got a damn good rifle. He'd ort to have—he treats it like it was a baby, er made of gold, er somethin'—allus cleanin' it, er rubbin' it, er 'ilin' it, er somethin'. He's damn tetchy about it, too. Allus handles it hisself. I picked it up one day, an' he bawled hell out of me—told me to take my hands off'n it, an' leave 'em off. It's the only time I ever seen him git riled up. Like I said, he's a good guy to work for."

"Seems like a good feller, all right," Pot-Gutted John said. "Seems like he's kinda deef in his right ear. I sat next to him on his right side 'tother night in the stud game, an' when I'd call, er raise he'd turn his head clean around so's his left ear could ketch what I said."

"Might be," One-Armed admitted. "It ain't very bad though, I guessed. I ain't had no trouble makin' him hear. Well, so long. I'm a-goin' fishin'. Mess of fish would go pretty good. If I ketch enough I'll fetch you boys some. We'll be pullin' out pretty quick, an' I won't git another chanct."

"Where you headin', next time?" Black John asked.

"We figger to go up to the White a piece, an' look over some of them cricks up there."

Pot-Gutted John grinned. "Better keep off'n Skookum Crick," he said, "er Old Matt Tabor'll hang yer hide on a limb. He figgers he owns Skookum from one end to 'tother."

One-Armed John scowled. "Old Matt's location ain't no bigger'n no one elses. He's got a Discovery claim on Skookum—an' that's all he has got. An' he ain't got no rights at all on none of them pups an' feeders that runs into it."

"It's about time Matt was showin' up fer his winter's supplies," Cush said. "He gen'ly comes in about this time of year."

"His winter's supplies, an' his fall drunk," Pot Gut amended. "Last year he hung around fer a week."

"Yeah," One Armed John scowled, "an' this time he hadn't better drop no pepper in my licker, er I'll knock his damn head off. It damn near burnt my throat out. I couldn't talk good fer a week. That's a hell of a joke to play on a man—what I mean."

Collins stepped into the room, and grinned at One Armed John. "What, idling away your time! I thought you were going fishing."

"Yeah, I'm goin', right now. Jest stopped in fer a drink an' got

to chawin' the fat with the boys. We'll have fish fer supper, all right. I know right where to go." He stepped out, and a moment later stuck his head through the doorway. "Hey, youse guys—speakin' of the devil an' up he pops! Old Matt's jest pullin' in to the landin'."

The announcement was followed by the bellowing voice of old Matt who invariably staged his arrival at the fort to the accompaniment of vociferous song:

Little black bull slid down the mountain, long time ago.
Long time ago. Long time ago.
Scraped his horn on a hickory saplin' long time ago!

The bellowing voice boomed louder, filling the room with its raucous volume as the big man barged through the doorway:

He pawed the dust in the heifer's faces,
Long time ago!

The song ceased and pausing abruptly in mid-floor the huge man surveyed the little group at the bar. "What the hell's goin' on here—a funeral? Fill 'em up, Cush! By God, it takes old Matt to lively things up! Shove me out two glasses, Cush. It'll take me till midnight, drinkin' right- an' left-handed to ketch up. You boys has got a start on me."

Black John grinned. "I guess you'll ketch up all right, Matt—jedgin' from past performances. How's things goin' on Skookum?"

"Goin' all right. Hell, I'm shovellin' out more dust than any one man's got a right to! Come spring I'll have to take me out a new claim to cache the dust on." He lifted the bottle from the bar, took a big drink from it and filled the two glasses Cush had set before him. With one in each hand, he cried, "Drink up, boys! By God, I kin shoot faster, jump higher, yell louder, an' spit straighter than any man on Halfaday fer dust er licker!" He tossed off the two drinks and glared about him.

Pot Gutted John laughed. "It shore ain't goin' to take you long to ketch up with us, workin' two glasses an' the bottle! Hell, yer ketched up a-ready. We ain't only had three drinks."

"What do you mean—ketched up! Cripes, you fellas is here every day in the year—an' I only git here spring an' fall. I've got six months ketchin' up to do in a week—an' the way you fellas pours it down, that's a damn tough chore fer any man. Fill 'em up ag'in, Cush. An' send that damn One Armed John up an' down the crick

to tell the boys to come on in an' celebrate. Tell 'em old Matt Tabor's hit the crick, an' we got a legal hollerday fer a week!"

"One Arm ain't here," Cush said. "He went fishin'."

"Fishin'—hell! I seen him sneakin' around the corner of the buildin' when I come up the bank."

"Yeah, that's when he went."

"Haw, haw, haw! 'Fraid I'd feed him some more pepper in his licker, eh? I damn near laughed my head off—never seen a man come so clost to chokin' to death in my life—what with coughin' an' sneezin', an' the water runnin' out of his eyes. Guess it learnt him to keep off'n Skookum, all right. I run him off'n the crick, onct. Told him if he ever showed up there ag'in, I'd nail his ears up over my door."

"One Arm's all right," Black John observed. "He wouldn't harm no one."

"Mebbe he wouldn't. But that ain't sayin' I want him snoopin' around on Skookum—him, nor no one else. I run a couple chechakos off'n the crick along this summer, an' from the way they tuk out, with me kickin' the dust out from in under their feet every jump with that old forty-five-ninety of mine, I'll bet they're goin' yet."

Black John remarked, noting that Pete Collins had been a silent listener, "After all, Matt, a man don't git a grant to a whole crick, jest because he filed a Discovery claim on one. Others has got a right to file there, too."

"I don't want no neighbors, an' I ain't goin' to have none," Tabor replied. "They's plenty other cricks in the country without folks comes crowdin' in on Skookum. Come spring, I'll have all the dust I want, an' I'm a-goin' back to Minnesoty an' buy all the licker in town, an' buy me the biggest damn farm in Stearns County, an' marry me the prettiest gall in the hull damn state, an' git me the reddest-wheeled buggy an' the fastest hoss in the hull U. S. By God, I'll show 'em! I'll have more damn fun than anyone in the world!"

"That seems to cover everything except the sun, moon, an' stars, Matt," Black John laughed. "Looks like you've mapped out quite a program. But if you figure on gittin' married you'd ort to lay by some of yer dust fer what kids you might have."

"To hell with what kids I might have! An' I ain't got no folks to worry about, neither. I was found on a stoop, an' raised in a foundlin' home along with a hundred other kids. I skipped out when I got big enough an' I've made my own way ever since. An' by God, what kids I might have kin do likewise!"

Others drifted in during the afternoon, and toward suppertime One Armed John stepped through the doorway carrying a string of fish. Making his way toward Collins, he passed behind Tabor who, with a quick backward thrust of his foot, tripped him so that he sprawled his length on the floor. He was up in an instant, and as Tabor turned from the bar, laughing, One Arm whirled the fish squarely into his face. "Take that, big mouth!" he cried.

Dashing the slime from his eyes, Tabor bellowing with rage, launched a kick that caught the one-armed one squarely in the seat of the pants with a force that fairly lifted him from the floor. One Armed John retreated across the floor. In the doorway he paused, and shook his fist at Tabor. "Damn you!" he cried, his voice shrill with rage, "I'm a-goin' after my rifle—an' if you're here when I git back, I'll make you jump in the crick!"

Both Black John and Collins slipped from the room, a few moments later met One Armed coming from One Eyed John's cabin, blood in his eye, and rifle in hand.

Collins sought to deter him. "Hold on, One Arm," he said. "It was a damn dirty trick—to trip you the way he did—but it ain't a shooting matter. And you evened it up with that string of fish."

"Yeah, an' he onevened it ag'in! Can't no one kick me hard as he done an' git away with it! Cripes, I thought I was goin' on out through the roof! By God, I'll make him jump in the crick, er I'll blow his damn head off!"

Black John's eyes narrowed, ominously. "Trippin' an fish-slappin', an' pants-kickin' is one thing—but shootin' a man is somethin' else ag'in. You've lived here on Halfaday, One Arm, long enough to know the rules. An' you know the graveyard's full of folks that broke 'em. You can go ahead an' shoot Matt Tabor if you want to. That's your business. But if you do we'll string you up, shore as hell, an' carry you out back an' bury you alongside them others. That'll be our business. An' that ain't no idle warnin', nor no threat. It's a promise—an' I never give a promise yet, I didn't keep."

As the anger faded from One Armed John's eyes, Collins laid a hand on his shoulder. "Go on, One Arm," he said, a note of sympathy in his voice. "Go back to the cabin an' stay there till we hit out on that trip. You can put in the time fishin'. But keep away from Cush's an' you'll keep out of trouble."

As the two made their way back to the saloon Collins said, "A man could hardly blame One Arm for shooting Tabor after what he did to him. Would you really have hung him if he had?"

Black John nodded. "Yer damn right we would. He'd get a fair trial, but shootin' an onarmed man's murder. An' we hang murderers on Halfaday."

"But One Arm's a good fellow. The men here on the crick all know him. Maybe your miner's meeting would vote to acquit him."

"Not a chanct. Miner's meetin's don't try a man on his past record. If the evidence shows that he jumped a claim, or robbed a cache er murdered a man, by God, we hang him, no matter what his past record was. It's the way we keep the crick moral."

III

RUNNING TRUE TO FORM, old Matt Tabor kept things lively at Cushing's Fort for a week. He rigged his bed in a corner of the storeroom and slept till noon each day, wolfed down the prodigious breakfast that Cush's Indian woman cooked for him, spent the afternoons drinking with all and sundry at the bar, and the nights playing stud. Just before supper on the last afternoon of his stay, he faced Cush across the bar. "You got all my stuff done up—every damn thing in that list I give you?"

Cush nodded. "Yeah, it's all done up an' piled to one side, there in the storeroom. You want to check it over?"

"Hell, no! Why'n hell should I waste my time doin' your job? Tell me how much it comes to an' I'll pay you right now. There'll be four Siwashes with a couple of canoes come fer it in the mornin'." Clawing through his pockets he produced various crumpled wads of paper money which he piled on the bar before him.

Cush consulted a memorandum. "The stuff comes to seven hundred an' four dollars," he said.

Tabor smoothed out the crumpled bills, and passed them across the bar, one by one, counting aloud as he did so. "There you be," he concluded, "an' I've got sixty-five dollars left. Belly up, boys an' we'll drink up the damn dirty paper! Here I fetch down couple hundred ounces of damn good Skookum Crick dust, figgerin' you boys might take me fer the bulk of it in the stud game, instead of which I git a week's drunk, an' half a year's supply of grub, an' sixty-five dollars to boot, without touchin' a damn ounce of my dust! You boys better git you a deck of cards an' go out back somewheres an' practice up—lettin' an old coot from the cricks come in an' take you fer all them bills! Keep on fillin' up the glasses, Cush, till them sixty-five dollars is gone—then I'll be on my way. An' quick as I git home, I'll pop them two hundred ounces right back in my cache—you bet!"

Collins smiled and held up his glass. "Here's looking at you," he said. "But you ain't pulling out this evening, are you? Why not wait till tomorrow? Hell, with luck like yours, you could run that sixty-five dollars up to a thousand by morning."

"Not by a damn sight, I couldn't," old Matt exclaimed. "My luck's run out. I got a hunch. A man's a damn fool that goes ag'in his hunch—an' my hunch says my luck's changed. A man's got to watch the signs. When the signs says a man's luck's changed, it's changed."

Black John grinned. "What kind of signs do you go by, Matt?" he asked. "I might stand in need of them hunches myself, some time."

"They's plenty signs, if a man's got sense enough to heed 'em. This time it's the spider."

"The spider?"

"Yeah, the spider that's got his web hangin' down from the rafter right over where I sleep there in the storeroom. Every noon when I wake up I lay there a while tryin' to figger where the hell I'm at, an' I watch that there spider runnin' up an' down that strand of web. Well, sir—this mornin' he clumb up it hind end first—an' every other mornin' he clumb it head end first. An' when I seen that I knowed my luck had turned. A man's a damn fool to try to go ag'in his luck. So, I'm right now on my way." Stepping into the storeroom, he reappeared with his packsack and headed for the outside. In the doorway he paused. "Keep on shovin' out the drinks till that sixty-five is gone, Cush," he said. "So long, boys—see you in the spring, when my luck's had time to fresh up ag'in!"

A few minutes later Collins yawned and stretched his arms above his head. "Well, I guess I'll go home and roll in. Too damn many all-night sessions of stud to suit me. I've got to be catching up on my sleep."

He left the saloon, and a short time later Black John slipped out and headed for his cabin.

IV

LATE IN THE AFTERNOON of the fifth day thereafter it was Matt Tabor who barged through the doorway of the saloon to interrupt a cribbage game between Cush and Pot Gutted John. "Where's One Armed John?" he demanded in a voice hoarse with rage.

Pot Gut pegged his hand and eyed the irate man. "He's down to One Eyed John's cabin I guess," he answered. "Leastways him and

Pete Collins was choppin' firewood there when I come by half an hour ago."

Tabor turned toward the door. "By God, when I git hold of him I'll break him in two!" he roared.

Cush shoved the steel-bowed, square-framed spectacles from nose to forehead and frowned. "What the hell's ailin' you, Matt?" he asked. "Jest because One Arm belted you in the face with a string of fish ain't no call fer you to go on the warpath damn near a week later. Besides which, you tripped him er he wouldn't of done it—an' besides that, you h'isted him one in the pants that damn near put him through the roof. An' I'm tellin' you right now—hadn't be'n fer Pete Collins an' Black John, One Arm would of blow'd yer head off that day. Them two ketched him headin' back here with his rifle, an' turned him back."

"The hell with what happened here! I ain't payin' no heed to that. But the damn dirty sneakin' coot robbed my cache!"

"Yer crazy! One Arm wouldn't rob no cache."

"The hell he wouldn't! He did. An' he can't lie out of it. His fresh tracks is right there in wet snow back of my shack where he snuck up to see if I was home. When I got back to Skookum I went right to my cache to put back them two hundred ounces I fetched down here an' didn't have to use. An' the cache was okay. Then the next night when I went to it to put in the four an' a half ounces I sluiced out that day, the cache was empty. Not a damn ounce left out of more'n four thousan' ounces—better'n sixty-five thousan' dollars."

"How do you know them was One Arm's tracks you claim is there in the mud?"

"I know they're his'n! When I tripped him up that day, right here in the saloon, he went sprawlin' on his belly, an' the soles of his pacs showed up plain the way his knees was bent. They was new pacs, an' I seen the pattern on them rubber soles, plain as I see the nose on yer face—four bars acrost 'em an' a big S in the middle of a circle."

Cush nodded. "Yeah, I sold One Arm a pair of pacs like that a couple weeks ago. But that ain't sayin'—"

"It's sayin' all I want to know!" Tabor roared. "He'll tell me where he's got my dust cached, er I'll choke the livin' daylights outa him!"

As the man disappeared through the doorway, Cush turned to Pot Gutted John. "Slip over to Black John's cabin an' tell him to git over here right away er hell'll be to pay. If One Arm sees

old Matt chargin' in on him with blood in his eye he'll shoot him shore as hell."

Just as Pot Gut reached Black John's door the sound of a shot rang out. "Too late," he exclaimed, as Black John stepped from his cabin. "He's up an' done it!"

"Who done what to who?"

"One Arm's shot old Matt Tabor. Cush claimed he would onlest you got there first."

"H-u-u-m," Black John said, leading the way toward Cush's. "The facts will bear lookin' into."

"Yeah," Pot Gut agreed. "But—John, if One Arm has shot him, ain't it self-defense, er somethin'? Old Matt ain't no hell of a loss, anyways you look at him. An' One Arm—Cripes, he wouldn't harm no one. He's be'n around here a long time, an'——"

"Did you see Matt when he headed fer One Eyed John's?"

"Shore I seen him. He stopped in the saloon an' ask' where One Arm was at."

"Was Matt heeled?"

"Well, no. That is, not that I could see, he wasn't."

"Shootin' an unarmed man is murder. I warned One Arm that we'd hang him if he shot old Matt the last time he tried it."

"But hell, John—you got to remember, One Arm's be'n around here quite a while—an' well, damn it—when you git to likin' a fellow, seems like, somehow—you kinda hate to hang him. An' besides, if One Arm got hung, who the hell could we buy fish off'n?"

They reached the saloon to find Cush waiting in the doorway. "One Arm's prob'ly shot Old Matt," he said glumly. "Mat claimed he robbed his cache. Said he seen One Arm's tracks by his shack there on Skookum."

Pete Collins came running up as Cush finished. "Well, it's happened," he panted. "One Arm shot Matt Tabor, just as he threatened he would!"

Black John nodded. "Yeah, we heard the shot. Did Tabor attack him?"

"He didn't have time to. We were in the cabin and heard someone running down the trail, and the next thing we knew Tabor was in the clearing, and One Arm grabbed up his rifle and drilled him right through the middle."

"Did One Arm skip out?"

"No, he knew it was no use. I told him to wait there and I'd tell you and Cush. I thought you'd ought to know."

"You done right," Black John commended, and turned to Cush,

who had stepped to the door. "Lock up. You're the coroner. We'll go down to One Eye's an' hold the inquest."

Red John came around the corner of the building and eyed the group. "What's all the excitement?" he asked.

"One Arm's shot Matt Tabor," Cush replied, as he snapped the huge padlock on the door. "Matt claimed he robbed his cache."

"Hell, One Arm never robbed no cache!"

"Of course he didn't," Collins agreed. "There was bad blood between 'em, that's all. We all saw what happened here in the saloon, and we all heard One Arm threaten to shoot him. In fact Black John and I prevented him from shooting him that day. Didn't we, John?"

"We shore did," Black John agreed. "Turned him back right there on the trail with a warnin' that if he shot Tabor, we'd hang him shore as hell."

"Come on," Cush said, "Let's git the inquest over. I don't want to lose no more trade than what I've got to. At that, there ain't only four of you fer a jury an' accordin' to law, there'd ort to be six. We hadn't ort to let One Arm set on it, seein' he done the shootin'."

"Him nor Collins, neither," Black John said. "Collins is a material witness. But there's Short John—"

"Hell, he ain't here," Cush exclaimed, "an' it would take an hour to fetch him."

"He can serve *in absentia,*" Black John said, "that's Latin fer sayin' a man's here when he ain't. An' it's legal as hell."

"Still we ain't got only four—if Collins can't set on it."

"Well, there's One Eyed John an' Olson—we can use them in a pinch."

"But cripes—they're both dead!"

"Well, so's Tabor—so what the hell's the difference. Come on—let's get goin'."

Proceeding to One-Eyed John's the five eyed the body of Tabor which lay at the edge of the small clearing, passed on to the cabin, and ranged themselves about the room. Black John rapped on the table with his knuckles.

"Cush, bein' coroner, convenes this here inquest over the body of the late Matt Tabor. In the first place, Cush—what's Matt's status?"

"His which?"

"Is he alive, er dead?"

"He looked deader'n hell a minute ago."

"Okay. Havin' established the fact of death, we will now proceed to investigate the means by which the said Matt Tabor's death

was come by. In your opinion, Cush was this here death violent, er natural?"

"Natural."

"What! With a bullet hole plumb through him, an' blood runnin' all over the snow!"

"Shore," Cush replied. "A man in that fix would nach'ly be dead, wouldn't he?"

Black John grinned. "Yer p'int seems well taken. Now, fer the first witness, Cush calls Pete Collins. Pete, do you swear to tell the truth, the hull truth, er any part of it, s'e'lpe God?"

"I do."

"All right, go ahead an' tell us what come off here."

"One Armed John and I were in the cabin overhauling our outfit for a prospecting trip and we heard someone running down the trail, and the next thing we knew Tabor showed up in the clearing, and One Arm grabbed up his rifle, there in the corner, and shot him—"

One Armed John leaped forward and faced the man, his eyes wide with horror. "Why—you damn liar! You shot him yerself!"

Black John banged on the table with his fist. "Silence!" he roared. "You shet up till the witness gets through. Then you'll be given a chanct to talk—an' on top of that yer fined a round of drinks fer contempt of a coroner's inquest. Go ahead, Pete. What happened, then?"

"Well, that's about all there is to tell, except that I told One Arm to wait here till I notified you and Cush."

"Okay. Now One Arm step out in front of Cush there." Having sworn him in, Black John eyed him sternly. "Go ahead an' tell your story, rememberin' that perjury is hangable on Halfaday, in case we'd fall down on a conviction for murder."

"I never done it," One Arm said. "Like Pete says, we was settin' here goin' over the outfit, when we heer'd someone runnin', an' then Tabor showed up, an' 'fore I know'd it Pete retched for his rifle an' let him have it, an' Matt, he dropped right there where he's layin'."

"Did you, er did you not, threaten to shoot Tabor?"

"Shore I did. But—"

"Did Pete Collins an' I, er did we not, stop you out there on the trail, the other day, an' did you er did you not, have a loaded rifle in yer hands an' threaten to make the said Matt Tabor jump in the crick er you'd blow his damn head off?"

"Yeah, shore you did. An' I'd of shot him, too. But—"

"An' did I, er did I not, warn you that if you shot Tabor, we'd hang you shore as hell?"

"Yeah, that's what you claimed—but I never shot him! Pete Collins shot him."

"Why?"

"Damn if I know. He jest up an' shot him, that's all I know."

"Have you ever heard Collins threaten to shoot him?"

"No."

"Don't you know it to be a fact that damn near everyone on the crick heard you threaten to shoot him?"

"I don't give a damn if they did, er didn't. I never done it."

"That's all," Black John said, and turned to the jurors. "You men have viewed the corpse, an' heard the evidence. I might p'int out that in view of the contradictory nature of the evidence, we'll have to use our own judgment in decidin' which of the two witnesses we'll hold fer trial by miner's meetin'. Takin' into consideration the fact that Collins prob'ly wouldn't have had no motive fer shootin' Tabor, who was practically a total stranger to him, an' also the fact that One Arm an' Tabor had had trouble before, an' One Arm had threatened him, I believe we must vote to hold One Arm fer trial. All so minded signify by sayin' 'Aye'—contrary 'No'."

Black John's "Aye" was seconded by weak assent from the others. "Okay,' he said. "Cush's verdict is that the said One Armed John be remanded fer trial by a miner's meetin' to be held in the saloon tomorrow evenin'. He app'ints Pete Collins to go up an' down the crick an' notify the boys of the meetin'. He also app'ints Pot Gutted John, an' Red John to take the said One Arm to Pot Gut's cabin, an' there hold him prisoner, to be delivered at the meetin' in good shape. Allowin' the prisoner to escape will be considered skullduggery in the first degree, an' hangable, as such. Inquest adjourned to the saloon where the round of drinks assessed agin One Arm will be drunk."

Red John spoke up. "Hey, John—miner's meetin's is legal enough where there ain't no law, like most times on Halfaday. But I seen Constable Brock couple days ago. He claimed he was goin' up to Sebastians Village on Ladue Crick, an' then he'd swing over here. He'd ort to git here by tomorrow night."

"Okay," Black John said. "I wish it was Corporal Downey instead of Brock. But with the law on the crick we won't have to hold no miner's meetin', so Pete an' me will haul the corpse up to Cush's an' pack it in snow so it will keep. An' also, I'll take the two rifles

there in the corner, an' carry 'em up to Cush's fer Brock's inspection." He turned to Collins. "No objection, I s'pose to takin' yer rifle along with One Arm's. Brock'll want to see all the evidence."

Collins hesitated only a moment. "No. No, of course not. Sure—take it along. We've got to help the police all we can."

Black John picked up the two rifles. "Well, come on, boys. We'll be gettin' back to the saloon."

V

Constable Brock, r. n. w. m. p., arrived at Cushing's Fort the following evening to find an expectant gathering of the outlawed men of Halfaday Creek awaiting him. This gathering was composed entirely of Alaska wanteds, a local term used to designate those citizens whose difficulty was with the American, as Alaskan authorities, and who had nothing to fear from the Canadian officer. The Yukon wanteds were wont to keep discreetly out of sight whenever an officer of the Mounted showed up on the creek.

Black John greeted the officer cordially. "Hi, there, Brock; On time to the minute. Step right up to the bar. The house is buyin' a drink. I guess you know all the boys here, except mebbe Pete Collins. Pete, he's a newcomer amongst us—doin' a little prospectin' out in the hills." He turned to Collins. "Pete, this here's Constable Brock. Damn good man on the trail, Brock is. You'd ort to make a trip with him, sometime."

Brock filled the glass Cush set before him and glanced about the room. "What's goin' on?" he asked casually. "Somebody's birthday, or somethin'?"

"No, the fact is, Brock, one of our esteemed citizens is accused of murder. Normally we'd have gone ahead an' held a miner's meetin' and hung the guilty party, forthwith. But, bein' as Red John claimed you told him a couple days back that you aimed to swing around here after visitin' Sebastians Village, we deemed it advisable to turn the case over to the constituted authorities. On Halfaday, Brock, we aim to work hand in glove with the police."

"Who's accused of this murder?"

"One Armed John."

"One Armed John! Cripes—why would One Arm murder anybody?"

Black John grinned. "Gettin' around up an' down the crick, like he does, One Arm has found more corpses than all the rest of us put together. But it's quite a while sence he found one, an' bein' as

me an' Cush is habited to slip him a small fee fer his trouble, mebbe he decided to sort of boost business a bit."

"Have you got a *corpus delicti?*"

"Yer damn right. Old Man Tabor's playing that part. He's good an' fresh, too. Me an' Pete packed him in snow."

"Where's One Arm?"

"We've got him, too. Pot Gut an' Red John stood guard on him an' a couple hours ago they fetched up here an' we stuck him in the hole till you come along."

"Why would One Arm kill old Matt?" Brock asked.

"Ol' Matt had it comin'," Long Nosed John opined. "He's allus bedevilin' One Arm."

"That's right," Short John agreed. "Told him to keep off'n Skookum Crick, er he'd nail his ears up over his door."

"Yer damn right," Red John added, "an' on top of that he stuck pepper in One Arm's whiskey an' damn near choked him to death, one time."

"Shore he did," Pot Gutted John added, "an' last week when he was here he stuck out his foot an' tripped One Arm flat on his belly—right there where yer standin'."

"Besides which he rutted One Arm one in the seat of the pants with the toe of his boot that h'isted him plumb off'n the floor," Cush added.

But you've got to remember, Cush," Black John said, "that One Arm had smacked him plumb in the face with a string of fish."

"Well, who the hell wouldn't—trippin' him like he done?"

"What I claim," Pot Gut said, "One Arm had a right to shoot him."

"He evidently thought so," Pete Collins added. "We all heard him threaten to kill him, and Black John and I slipped out and turned him back with a loaded gun in his hand."

"All that bedevilin' don't add up to a murder," Brock said. "What did One Arm do—go over to Skookum an' shoot Matt?"

"No," Black John explained, "Matt was shot in the clearin' of One Eyed John's cabin. Matt, he was here on his semi-annual drunk when these bedevilin' incidents happened. He pulled out fer home an' five days later he showed up here at the saloon an' told Cush an' Pot Gut his cache had be'n robbed, an' he figured One Arm had robbed it, an' when he found out that One Arm an' Pete Collins was livin' in One Eye's cabin, he hit out fer there. Pot Gut come to my cabin to see if there wasn't somethin' we could do about it, when we heard a shot, an' when we got to Cush's, Pete Collins come runnin' up an' said that One Arm had shot Matt."

"That's right," Collins concurred. "We heard someone running down the trail, and suddenly Matt showed up in the clearing with blood in his eye, and One Arm grabbed up his rifle and shot him dead."

"We went down an' held an inquest," Black John continued, "during the course of which One Arm denied shootin' Matt—claimin' it was Pete that shot him."

Collins smiled. "But I don't hold any grudge against the poor old fellow. It was a clumsy and preposterous lie, uttered on the spur of the moment. Why should I have shot Tabor? I never met him till he showed up here at the Fort, and during his stay we all drank together and played cards. On the other hand everyone knows there was bad blood between One Arm and Tabor."

Brock nodded. "Everyone's spoke up except One Armed John. Fetch him in an' we'll hear what he's got to say."

Red John and Pot Gutted John stepped into the storeroom, rolled the barrel of pork aside and raised the trap door to allow One Armed John to climb out of the "hole", a log-lined cell constructed beneath the storeroom floor for the safe keeping of those characters whose detention was deemed advisable. As the prisoner stepped into the saloon accompanied by his guards, he eyed the officer.

"Hello, Brock. Red John told me you was headed this way. An' now you've got here I s'pose you figger, like Black John, that I shot old Matt Tabor. But it's a damn lie. Pete Collins there shot him, an' claimed it was me."

"But you had threatened to shoot him, hadn't you?"

"Shore I did. But you can't hang a man fer threatenin'."

"Why did Collins shoot him?"

"How the hell do I know why he done it? He up an' shot him—I seen him do it—an' that's all I know about it. Onlest it was somethin' Old Matt said to him, er done to him over on Skookum."

"This trouble you had, and the threat you made to shoot Tabor was while he was here, last week?"

"Shore it was. But I hated the old son of a gun before that."

"You say at Collins might have shot Tabor for somethin' that happened on kookum? Has Collins be'n on Skookum sence Tabor was here?"

"Shore he has—him an' me both. We pulled out from here the same evenin' old Matt pulled out—only he went back in his canoe, an' me an' Pete cut acrost."

"Why did you cut acrost?"

"Pete, he wanted to do some prospectin' over in there. I'm workin' fer Pete—er I was till he told that damn lie."

"So you were on Skookum when Matt got back there?"

"Pete was. I wasn't. There's a hell of a swamp jest this side of Skookum, an' we never got to the crick till noon, the next day, an' Pete, he was wet to his knees, an' all over mud, an' mad as hell, so he said he'd be damned if he'd go back through the swamp fer no money, so he sent me back to git the canoe, an' his other pacs, so when we come back we could go down the White, an' up Half-aday. So I loan't him my dry pacs an' come back for the canoe an' it was two days before I got back to Skookum, an' when I did git back, Pete, he says to throw the stuff in the canoe an' git to hell out of there.

"I asks him if old Matt run him off an' he says he ain't saw Matt —an' I'm paid to do like he says an' not ask no questions. So we loaded up an' come on back here."

Brock turned to Collins. "How about it?" he asked. "Did you see Tabor on Skookum?"

"No, I didn't. The fact is I met an Indian over there who told me that Tabor had run several prospectors off the crick, and had threatened to shoot anyone who prospected there. So rather than have any trouble with Tabor, I decided to try my luck somewhere else, and when One Arm came back with the canoe, we pulled out."

"Tabor told Cush and Pot Gut that One Armed John robbed his cache. Do you know anything about that?"

"He's a damn liar! I never robbed his cache—nor no one else's neither!" One Armed John cried.

"I know nothing about what One Arm did between the time I sent him for the canoe, and the time he returned with it," Collins replied. "I hadn't thought of it before, but he would have plenty of time to rob it."

Brock nodded, and eyed One Armed John. "I'm arrestin' you for the murder of Matt Tabor, an' takin' you down to Dawson to stand trial. It's my duty to warn you that anything you say may be used against you." He turned to Collins. "An' I'm takin' you along as a material witness."

Black John grinned. "I don't s'pose it's occurred to you that you might be puttin' the cart before the horse, has it?"

"What do you mean," Brock asked, eyeing the big man sharply.

"Meanin' that a little further questionin' might throw a different aspect on the case."

Brock's brow drew into a frown. "I don't know what you're drivin' at," he said. "On the evidence I don't see how I can do any different. But I know that Corporal Downey's got a lot of respect

for your judgment. If you can help me out on this case, I'll sure be thankful. I don't claim to know it all."

The big man nodded. "An' that's where yer different from most of the rookies. It's why, if you keep yer eyes an' ears open, you'll prob'ly make a damn good policeman. Fer's I can see yer as wide between the ears as Downey is—but you ain't got Downey's experience."

"Nor yours, either," Brock grinned. "S'pose you go ahead with this further questionin' you spoke about."

"Okay." Black John's eyes roved about the room, and finally centered upon One Armed John's feet. "Them pacs you've got on—is them the ones you got off Cush, lately?"

"Shore they be."

"An' the ones you loaned Collins when he got his feet wet?"

"Yup."

"How about it, Collins—did you borrow them pacs One Arms got on?"

"Why—yes, of course, I did. Mine were wet and muddy, so I borrowed his. He was wearing another pair at the time."

"An' you wore 'em, I s'pose, whilst you was on Skookum?"

"Yes—it took a couple of days for mine to dry out. What's the difference what pacs I had on?"

Black John ignored the question. "Now, turnin' to the matter of guns. You was in the cabin when you claim One Arm shot Tabor—which gun did he use—yours, or his?"

"Why—I don't know. I didn't notice. The two guns are just alike. They stood there together in the corner. He grabbed up one of them, and fired, and Tabor dropped in his tracks."

"Pretty good shootin', wasn't it—to hit Tabor, dead center, through the doorway an' acrost' the clearin' an' him on the move."

"It was damn good shooting," Collins admitted. "One Arm is a good shot."

"It wasn't no shot that a man could of made without drawin' a fine sight? Couldn't have be'n a snap shot—like shootin' from the hip, er jest pullin' up an' blazin away?"

"I'll say it couldn't! From the angle he stood he couldn't have had more than a foot of doorway to shoot through."

"An' you actually saw him take aim—line up his sights before he shot?"

"Sure I did. I was about to knock down the gun when he fired."

"Okay," Black John turned to Cush. "Fetch them two rifles over here, an' we'll find out which one killed old Matt. I couldn't find no empty shell on the floor over to One Eyed John's, so I

assume the empty is still in the chamber." When Cush brought the rifles, Black John held them up, one in each hand. "Now, Pete," he asked, "which one of these guns is yours?"

Unhesitatingly Collins indicated one of the rifles. Laying the other on the bar, Black John worked the bolt and ejected an empty shell. Then he ejected a loaded shell from the other rifle, and turned to the officer. "So you see, Brock, Matt Tabor was killed with Collins' rifle. Mebbe, now, you'd better make a shift in yer cast of characters, holdin' Collins fer the murder—an' One Arm fer the material witness."

"But—hell, John," the young officer said. "The two rifles stood together in the corner. One Arm simply grabbed up Collins' rifle instead of his own!"

Black John's lips settled into a grim smile as his shrewd gray eyes focused on Pete Collins' face—a face that had suddenly gone paper-white. "It couldn't have be'n a snap shot, Pete. You said so yerself. And you saw him take aim when he fired." Collins' lips moved feebly—but no words came. A thick ropy spittle drooled from one corner of his mouth, and he wiped it away with the back of his hand. Black John continued. "An' you admitted wearin' One Arm's new pacs whilst you was on Skookum. You didn't know that old Matt told Cush an' Pot Gut, jest before he was shot, that he seen the tracks of them pacs in the wet snow beneath his window. The jig's up, Collins—yer right now puttin' up as good a defense as you ever can, because nothin' you could ever say would acquit you."

Constable Brock stared from one to the other—from the shrewd, grimly-smiling face of Black John, to the trembling, drooling figure that stood leaning against the bar for support. "But—I—I don't understand," he said. "Why couldn't One Arm have used Collins' rifle."

The big man's grin widened. "Pick it up an' try it yourself," he said.

Brock picked up the rifle and threw it to his shoulder. "What the hell!" he exclaimed, lowering the gun and examining it.

Again he raised it to his shoulder, and again he lowered it and regarded it with a puzzled frown.

Black John laughed. "Off-set gun," he explained. "I've seen one er two of 'em before—but never one as good as this one. I'd say the stock was bent at the factory, with Collins right there for accurate measurement. You see, that right eye of his is glass—an' *that's* a damn good job, too—matches the other jest about perfectly." They

make these off-set guns for men who lose a right eye an' can't learn to shoot from the left shoulder, an' vicy-versy."

Numerous exclamations of surprise and incredulity greeted the words, as the men of Halfaday crowded closer to peer at the cowering man's eyes. "Cripes," Pot Gutted John cried. "He's be'n here a month an' none of us know'd his eye was glass! When did you find it out?" he asked, turning to Black John.

"The first day he come," the big man answered. "He stood just left of me at the bar, an' when I said somethin' to him, he turned to face me before he answered. I thought then he was deaf in his right ear. But when a little later, he turned clean around to p'int to the storeroom door, I figured it was his eye instead of his ear. Then, when he stood his rifle in the corner at the end of the bar, I noticed that it swung a little off center when he let go of it—didn't stand straight like a regular gun would. Then he sort of bristled up fer a second when I mentioned One Eyed John's cabin—thought fer a second I was kiddin' him about his affliction. Then half a dozen times, playin' stud, I could see he used his left eye only—I wouldn't have noticed that, though, if I hadn't known beforehand. He's got himself pretty well trained."

Brock nodded, and again picked up Collins' rifle and threw it to his shoulder, sighted with it, and lowered it again.

"Still I'm afraid a good lawyer would demonstrate to the court that a man who knew this gun was an off-set could sight it with his left eye, the same as Collins does. I just now tried it and the sights come in perfect line for the left eye."

Black John grinned. "It would take a damn good lawyer to prove how One Armed John could do it! With his right arm gone, how the hell could One Arm get a gun to his right shoulder? When that thought hit Collins, he collapsed like a wet sack—I noticed his eye starin' at One Arm's empty sleeve when the color begun drainin' from his face."

"For Pete's sake—get it over with!" Collins cried, in a low trembling voice. "I did it! I confess. I robbed his cache—and I shot him. Let's get out of here. I'll show you where I recached his dust."

When the officer had departed with his prisoner after securing Black John's promise that all necessary witnesses would appear at the trial when notified, One Armed John turned to the big man. "Then if you know'd all the time it was Pete shot old Matt why the hell did you scare the livin' daylights outa me, by claimin' I done it?"

Black John grinned. "As long as Collins thought I figured you done it, he wouldn't skip out, would he?"

"No—but why the hell couldn't you of helt him fer the miner's meetin' as well as me?"

"I saw the possibilities for a good drayma. You'll have to admit that it was much more dramatic to let the damn scoundrel stand up there an' convict himself, than to have merely arrested him."

"You an' yer damn draymas!" Cush growled from behind the bar. "You never pulled off one yet that someone didn't git the hell scairt out of 'em—only it's gen'ly me!"

Four days later Constable Brock returned to Halfaday with his handcuffed prisoner, and interrupted a dice game between Black John and Cush. "I want to search One Eyed John's cabin, where this damn cuss lived. He took me on a wild goose chase over on Skookum and showed me a niche in the rocks where he said he'd cached Tabor's dust. But there was no dust there!"

Black John shook his head slowly and regarded Collins with a frown. "Don't it beat hell, Brock, what damn liars these thieves is?

"Their duplicity is onbelievable. Go ahead an' hunt fer his cache. Good luck to you. It wouldn't be right to let the damn rascal profit from his crime, in case the law didn't hang him."

When the two had departed Cush eyed the big man across the bar. "You was gone fer a couple of days after old Matt went back," he said.

"Yeah, that's so, ain't it? Fact is, I figured Collins was goin' to make a play fer Matt's cache when I seen how his left eye glittered when he listened to Matt tell how much was in it. So I sort of loafed over to Skookum to see how he worked it. He watched Matt deposit the dust he fetched back in his cache—then he robbed it. It was a fairly good job—fer a glass-eyed man, I thought."

"How much was in Collins' cache when you robbed it?"

"Robbed it! What the hell do you mean—robbed? I merely removed the dust to prevent Collins from profitin' by a crime. If old Matt hadn't got shot, I'd have returned every ounce of it!"

"Oh, shore. But Matt got shot. How much was in it?"

"Right around four thousan' ounces. 'Long as Matt claimed he didn't have a relative in the world, there wouldn't be no p'int in makin' the Public Administrator try to dig up some. It would jest encourage a bunch of loose-moraled folks to put in fraudulent claims. So me an' you might's well divide it between us. It seems to be the only equitable solution."

Now On Sale

REX STOUT'S MYSTERY MONTHLY

It achieves new distinction as one of America's most celebrated detective anthologies.

For genuine reading pleasure, for superb enjoyment, for that hour or two of healthful relaxation REX STOUT'S MYSTERY MONTHLY presents such masters of MYSTERY and detection as:

REX STOUT • DASHIELL HAMMETT
RAYMOND CHANDLER • AGATHA CHRISTIE
MARGERY ALLINGHAM • CARTER DICKSON
CORNELL WOOLRICH
DOROTHY L. SAYERS, etc., etc.

•

For your pleasure read

REX STOUT'S MYSTERY MONTHLY

25c per copy

Available at your newsdealer or from the publishers

Avon Detective Mysteries, Inc.

119 West 57th Street, New York 19

THE AVON ANNUAL

1947

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY NUMBER

A New Collection of Great Modern Stories

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

S. J. PERELMAN — IRWIN SHAW

ROBERT WHITEHAND — PEARL BUCK

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD — WALTER D. EDMONDS

DOROTHY PARKER — SHOLOM ALEICHEM

SAMUEL ELKIN — RHYS DAVIES

35c per copy

On Sale at your Newsdealer or from

AVON PUBLICATIONS, INC.

119 West 57th St., New York 19

Still Available

Avon

MODERN SHORT STORY MONTHLY

35c per copy

2. JOHN O'HARA'S Files on Parade.
   Thirty-five Short Stories.
3. NOEL COWARD'S To Step Aside.
   Seven Long Short Stories.
4. WILLIAM SAROYAN'S from Inhale & Exhale.
   Thirty-one Selected Stories.
5. JAMES HILTON'S Ill Wind.
   Nine Related Great Short Stories.
6. SINCLAIR LEWIS' Selected Short Stories.
8. W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S First Person Singular.
   More Great Short Stories.
9. JOHN STEINBECK'S The Long Valley.
   12 Stirring Stories.
10. JAMES T. FARRELL'S Selected Modern Stories.
12. WILLIAM SAROYAN'S 34 More Great Stories.
13. LOUIS BROMFIELD'S Three Short Novels.
14. ERSKINE CALDWELL'S 22 Modern Stories.
    From "Jackpot."
16. FANNIE HURST'S Eight Long Short Stories.
17. THOMAS WOLFE'S Ten Short Stories.
18. W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S Ah King.
19. EDNA FERBER'S They Brought Their Women.
20. Twelve Selected Modern Stories by Twelve Famous Writers.
21. JAMES T. FARRELL'S 12 Great Modern Stories.
22. JAMES M. CAIN'S Career in C Major.
23. PEARL BUCK'S Great Stories of China.
24. LOUIS BROMFIELD'S Five Long Short Stories.
25. A NEW COLLECTION OF STORIES by Great Modern Writers.
26. BEN HECHT'S A Thousand and One Afternoons in New York.
27. DAMON RUNYON'S Ten Stories.
28. AN ANTHOLOGY OF SHORT STORIES by Famous Writers.
29. JOHN O'HARA'S Hope of Heaven.
30. ERSKINE CALDWELL'S Georgia Boy.
31. A NEW COLLECTION OF GREAT STORIES.
32. IRWIN SHAW'S Welcome to the City.
33. AN ANTHOLOGY OF GREAT STORIES.
34. GREAT STORIES by Louis Bromfield.
35. W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S Trembling of a Leaf.
36. RAFAEL SABATINI'S Stories of Love and Adventure.

READY SHORTLY

37. BEN HECHT'S Concerning a Woman of Sin.
38. W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S Mixture as Before.

On Sale at Your Newsdealer or from the Publishers

AVON PUBLICATIONS, INC.

119 West 57th Street New York 19, N. Y.

DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS

Or high on the slopes of the Rockies; in the badlands of the Dakotas or on the sun-colored deserts of the great southwest; wherever brave men and beautiful women have pioneered the western trail, a host of stories have celebrated their exploits. These tales — the stories of the Wild West — have become dear to the hearts of young and old America.

Now, in response to a growing public demand for an Avon collection of these great thrillers, we are happy to present . . .

THE AVON WESTERN READER

A NEW AVON QUARTERLY

A colorful and exciting collection of adventures and romances, featuring such world-famous masters of the Western story as

ERNEST HAYCOX	JAMES B. HENDRIX
WILLIAM MACLEOD RAINE	DEE LINFORD
HARRY SINCLAIR DRAGO	W. C. TUTTLE

AND OTHERS

Each and every narrative is carefully selected by our board of editors to guarantee you only the cream of Western story talent.

Ask for the

AVON WESTERN READER

AT YOUR FAVORITE NEWSSTAND

Only 25¢ per copy